VALLEY VOICE

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After a cat is fixed, an ear is clipped for identification.

Mooney's Grove's Feral Cats in Danger of Being Eliminated

CATHERINE DOE

This is the first part of a two-part series on saving Mooney's Grove's cats. The first part focuses on a volunteer group implementing the Trap and Release Program. Part two will focus on the county's response and moving forward.

During the November 5th Tulare County Supervisors meeting, Dr. Larry Weber, a retired pharmacist, made an impassioned appeal to the Supervisors to stop trapping and killing the cats in Mooney's Grove Park. He and a group of volunteers had successfully stabilized one colony, and hoped to stabilize the other two colonies through the Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) Program. His modest request that day was to ask for a one-year moratorium on the park's practice of killing the cats. During that year, the TNR program could be evaluated for its effectiveness in controlling and reducing the cat population in Mooney's Grove at no cost to the county.

The TNR Program is used all over the state except in the Central Valley, and is supported by all the major veterinaries. Tulare County's kill rates at 84.4% are the highest in California and are an unnecessary expense to Tulare County taxpayers.

Mooney's Grove is in Supervisor Phil Cox's district and he was briefed about the program the month before. He wasn't too interested in the cats, but appreciated the volunteer's passion and didn't oppose voting for the TNR Program. The supervisors listened politely to Dr. Weber, but their slight indifference was probably a sign that that they had bigger fish to fry and wished the staff would sort out the problem. Since Dr. Weber's presentation, however, communication with the county staff has ground to a complete halt and the killing has continued. The latest cat was killed on November 26th.

An adversarial relationship didn't always exist between the county and the volunteers implementing the TNR Program.

The partnership started out amicably when Amy King, curator of the Tulare County Museum in the park, called the Valley Oak SPCA to help her

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Higher Cost-Per-Vote Elections Apparently Not a Problem

STEVE PASTIS

Despite the higher cost per vote and lower voter turnout in odd-numbered year elections, there is little or no interest in Tulare County in moving elections to coincide with state and national elections.

The state election code gives districts the power to change the date of their elections. This was to help districts that had elections in odd-numbered years.

"Because of the cost, they allowed any board to move to an even-year election," said Hiley Wallis, Tulare County election division manager. "They can move the election with a bigger group and make it cheaper."

Voters in most of Tulare County went to the polls on November 5 to elect a variety of local officials, but this being an odd-numbered year, less than 18% of eligible voters in the county cast a ballot.

There were 124 votes cast in last month's Earlimart Public Utility District election, 121 in the election for Alpaugh Irrigation District Director and only 91 in the Lower Tule River Irrigation District. This can result in an expensive cost per vote, with as much as $25 or more per vote cast, when ballots only have one contest listed.

Local districts had significantly smaller vote counts than they would have if their elections were in even-numbered years, when many more voters come out to cast votes in state and national elections. Usually, however, this is not a problem.

"For the bulk of these districts, they usually don't get to an election," explained Wallis. "If there's more than one person that declares they want to run, then there's an election."

"There's a cost to having a precinct and for ballots, and to get our office ready," said Rita Woodard, Tulare County registrar of voters.

"We spread the cost based on voter

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Nelsen Named Visalia's New Mayor; Gubler New Vice-Mayor

CATHERINE DOE

There wasn't a dry eye in Visalia's City Hall on Tuesday, November 26, as the Visalia City Council convened to select a new mayor and vice mayor.

During a special session of the city council, Visalians gathered to witness a changing of the guard, but got so much more. Outgoing Mayor Amy Shuklian started the meeting with a proclamation declaring November 26, 2013 as Cash Shank Day, in honor of Shank, a five-year-old Visalia boy waging a courageous fight against brain cancer. He was unable to attend, but many family members were in the chambers to mark his day. His grandmother accepted a plaque presented to the family from Shuklian.

Shuklian was only able to get through the presentation with the aid of a few Kleenexes. The proclamation stated, "Cash has been an amazing ambassador for St. Jude's Children Research Hospital and an inspiration to all of us. Cash's grandmother describes him as the 'toughest little boy.' His parents, Rob and Megan, and his entire family are so proud of Cash for his bravery, smiles, hugs and fighting spirit in the midst of his adversity. Cash is a 'Superhero.'"

Shuklian ended with a quote from the late actor Christopher Reeve, "A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles."

The next order of business was for the three re-elected incumbents to take the oath of office and introduce their families. Steve Nelsen's family showed up in force, as did Warren Gubler's. Greg Collins had a surprise visit from his son, but the rest of his family was on the road and would not be home until the following day. Since this was Collins seventh time taking the oath of office, they had seen it before.

Newly elected Mayor Steve Nelsen and Vice-Mayor Warren Gubler.

Shuklian's last duty as mayor was to ask for nominations for Visalia's new mayor. Gubler made the motion that Nelsen take over as mayor and Bob Link seconded the motion. Nelsen accepted the post by thanking the citizens of Visalia and recounting the last few months of his campaign, which happened to be the last few months of his mother's life. She passed away before the election. The following is the finale to Nelsen's speech, and homage to his mother, read

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Galaxy Theatre Gets Go-Ahead to Sell Wine, Beer at Movies

JULIE FERNANDEZ

Photo by Don LeBaron courtesy www.Tulare Voice.com

Galaxy Theatre officials convinced Tulare city planning commissioners last week to allow them to sell alcohol to Tulare movie-goers, despite concerns raised by members of the public.

In a unanimous 7-0 vote, the Tulare Planning Commission agreed to a one-year trial to make sure Galaxy can exercise adequate control of customer activities inside the theater and in the parking lot.

A.J. Taylor, general manager of Galaxy in Tulare and director of training for all the chain's movie houses, said Galaxy enjoys an excellent reputation in Tulare and would never do anything to jeopardize that.

The purchase area for beer and wine will be separate from the regular concession stand and staff will be trained to prevent sales to underage patrons and to recognize signs of over-drinking, Taylor said.

The concept of selling wine and beer has proven "very successful and popular" at other theaters and it is something patrons have request-

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Be Careful What You Wish For

From the Monterey shale under our very feet to the Bakken formation beneath the Great Plains, the United States is riding high on an almost incalculably huge pool of oil that new technologies and methods of extraction now make accessible. In fact, recent reports indicate that these vast reserves might outstrip those of the rest of the world--especially Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia--making them "petro-irrelevant."

Drill, Baby, drill--right? Not so fast. Let's at least first consider some less than savory aspects of this bonanza. Not an embarrassment of riches so much, perhaps, as the hazard of them.

As with so many things we take under advisement when grappling with new technologies, how these might affect our environment must be foremost. Fracking, the method of fracturing shale and other rock formations, thereby freeing the oil they contain, and new deep-water drilling techniques make petroleum ever more economically viable both to access and prospect for. But beneath our nation fracking, while far from new, has as of late grown exponentially as a means of drilling.

Still, it remains highly controversial. Rife, and well-documented, are reports of flammable tap water--yet it cannot be proven that fracking has led to the introduction of methane into groundwater. Well-documented, too, is new seismic activity in areas geologically dormant before the introduction of fracking--yet it cannot be proven that fracking has led to the quaking of previously stable land. What is immediately demonstrable, and indeed occurs, is the spilling of toxic fracking fluids.

Many of the concerns therefore--and new regulations--about fracking are limited to these, with the happy result that we may now know what is being pumped at high pressure into the ground beneath us. Previously, these recipes were secret. But the regulation of such brews, in addition to the capture and treatment of waste water spewed forth, surely must be the initial steps of a deeper inquiry. Shouldn't we first establish, as best we can, whether fracking actually does contaminate groundwater and seismically destabilize those areas once known as solid? Of course! But here's a better question. A generation ago oil was considered a dwindling resource--so much so that conservation, from public transport systems to fuel efficiency standards, was prevalent in the consciousness of the era. This birthed the plethora of green and renewable energies we enjoy today. Will these be stilled by an new petro-abundance that technology now makes cheaply extracted?

In spite of an oil boom--despite this...temptation--shouldn't we still be pursuing energies less toxic to us all than oil has historically proven to be?

Because it's not just wealth, and its chimerical distribution to "everyone," that comes with striking it rich, so to speak, with oil. Crime also comes. In North Dakota and Montana, two states at the center of this new rush, crime has rocketed as workers--and cash--have flocked to fresh oil fields. According to the *New York Times*, in the booming areas of those states alone, crime has surged 32 percent since 2005. Watford City, N.D., saw a 565 percent increase in arrests for that time; in Roosevelt County, Montana, arrests have risen by 855 percent.

Be careful what you wish for.

And this is strictly on an inter-personal level. Can you imagine how unstable the globe would be if Russia, China and Saudi Arabia were rendered "petro-irrelevant?" California gubernatorial hopeful Tim Donnelly, a Republican from Twin Peaks, opines of oil, "We ought to be drilling it and fracking it rather than importing it from our enemies."Really? It's a pretty thought that our new petroleum predominance might go some way toward solving many of our domestic financial dilemmas. It is, indeed, a temptation. But it's fanciful to think that our bonanza will somehow pacify the world. Even if it could, we already know what environmental devastation is engendered by our over-dependence on just this single, solitary commodity.

Don't we?

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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POLITICAL FIX

CATHERINE DOE

VINCENT SALINAS TO RUN IN 2015

During the November 18th Visalia City Council meeting, Vincent Salinas graciously congratulated Greg Collins, Steve Nelsen and Warren Gubler for their recent re-election. Mr. Salinas then told Amy Shuklian and Bob Link to expect to see him in 2015. Whereas Mr. Salinas made his intentions clear that he will be running for city council in two years, it is uncertain who will be joining him on the ballot.

Mr. Link is retiring from a long career in the clothing business, but that doesn't mean he is retiring from civic life. "Basically the reason for retiring was that the building (where Link's is located) sold and that opportunity may not have presented itself again," said Mr. Link. He felt it was too hard to predict what he will be doing in two years, and did not want to rule out another run for city council.

Amy Shuklian, the outgoing mayor, expressed the same sentiment. "That's two years away," she said. "It's been six years and I've had a great time." When I mentioned that Mr.Collins will have held a council seat for 26 years by the end of this term, she exclaimed, "I'm not doing that! You might see me for the next four years but that might be it."

Mr. Salinas recently wrote in an editorial to the *Visalia Times-Delta* thanking his committee members "for their hard work and dedication in doing an excellent job on the campaign." He also thanked all those who contributed financially. "I hope I helped raise community awareness regarding issues we must deal with in the near future," he wrote.

There will be two seats up for re-election in 2015, and quite possibly only one incumbent running. Whereas low voter turnout worked against Mr. Salinas this year, it might be a blessing two years from now. With only 16% of registered voters taking the time to cast their ballot in an off year, name recognition will most likely rule the day, and Mr. Salinas may well prevail.

FIRST OFFICIAL CHALLENGER TO JERRY BROWN

Tim Donnelly, Republican Assemblyman from the Inland Empire, is the first candidate to officially announce a 2014 gubernatorial bid. Mr. Donnelly made a stop in Fresno in early November to drum up support during a statewide tour to announce his candidacy.

Mr. Donnelly is a former Minuteman border patrol leader who was detained at LA/Ontario Airport last year after a loaded gun was found in his carry-on. According to an Associated Press article on November 5th, Mr. Donnelly said that he is unfazed by a state electorate that leans far to his political left. That's fortunate for him--maybe he won't be surprised when he doesn't get past the June Primary.

Two other Republicans have since declared their intentions to run for governor, Abel Maldonado--who served two years as lieutenant governor--and George Radanovich, former congressman from Mariposa.

Mr. Donnelly's self-described "guerrilla grass-roots" campaign, is actually code for "no money." He has raised a paltry $29,000 to Mr. Maldonado's $44,000. Mr.Radanovich has not yet filed his Statement of Intention.

Jerry Brown? More than $10 million.

"You can't beat something with nothing," said GOP political strategist Rob Stutzman in a recent interview. "And Republicans, right now, are running just above the nothing line in terms of a challenger."

Mr. Brown is the longest-serving and oldest chief executive in state history. His father, Pat Brown, was also a popular two-time governor.

CALIFORNIA - REPUBLICAN PARTY'S BÊTE NOIRE

Want a quick way to figure out which Republican house seats in California are vulnerable? Just check who has endorsed the Immigration Reform Bill. Rep. Jeff Denham was the first Republican to do so and Rep. David Valadao soon followed. The Senate bill provides for a pathway to citizenship and includes many other provisions, such as employer verification, an agricultural worker program, and border security. Rep Devin Nunes and Rep. Kevin McCarthy have not endorsed the bill. Not coincidently, they are both in districts labeled as "safe Republican." Mr. Valadao's and Mr. Denham's districts are considered vulnerable.

Democrats will most certainly sweep California's statewide offices, and neither U.S. Senate seat is up for election in 2014. That makes Congressional elections much more important. Keeping the House is the Republicans' only realistic political strategy to make an impact on the last two years of Obama's presidency. Before the government shutdown no one really doubted that Republicans could lose the house. But now? Game on.

Democrats already have control of the Senate and need a net gain of 17 seats to get control of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Denham's district is the less vulnerable of the two. He has a 1% Democratic voter registration edge, and as of now is facing two weak Democratic challengers. Mr. Denham's District 10 leans Republican, but is still being targeted by the Democrats because he voted against ending the government shutdown.

Mr. Valadao's 21st District is considered a toss-up. His district is much more vulnerable, with a 15% Democratic voter registration edge and two very competent Democratic opponents, Amanda Renteria and John Hernandez.

Their outcomes could determine who controls the House in 2014.

There are a total of 53 Congressional seats in California. Thirty-eight are currently held by Democrats and 15 by Republicans. Democratic seats aren't totally safe, either. There is a possible reelection repercussion from the Obamacare roll-out debacle.

ONE LAST THING

Not being the product of a Catholic education, I only have good memories of my past working with the nuns at Catholic Charities or during the Sanctuary Movement. While priests talk the talk, the nuns walk the walk and embody the Church's teachings. That's why it was so surprising that, not just the hierarchy, but Pope Francis himself made the following statement:

"Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system."

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Covered California Launches Self-Service Website for Small Businesses

On December 2, Covered California officially launched the full self-enrollment function of the Small Business Health Options (SHOP) online marketplace. This new function on the Covered California website will enable small businesses to fully enroll for coverage that may begin as early as January 1.

"Small businesses now have new options to provide more choice for their employees and new affordable options for their business," said Covered California Executive Director Peter V Lee. "Covered California has created the Small Business Health Options Program to help the small business owners to get the best value for themselves and their employees. Since October, more than 1,500 small business owners have begun the process of exploring whether the SHOP program is right for them."

Small-business owners with one-to-50 eligible employees may now enroll in SHOP plans for coverage effective January 1. Like the health insurance plans in Covered California's individual market, SHOP plans were negotiated to bring a standardized set of benefits, a robust provider network and a broad choice of health insurance plans with competitive pricing to employers and their employees.

Previously, small business employers have been able to register online, check their eligibility and work with a Certified Insurance Agent to obtain a quote. The new system enhancements now allow online enrollment functionality for SHOP, including online quoting, the ability to submit an online application at www.coveredca.com in real-time, and for employers to initiate electronic open enrollment for their employees.

Many small business owners qualify for a federal tax credit to help offset contributions toward employee premiums. Beginning in 2014, the only way for small-business owners to access the tax credits is to purchase insurance through SHOP. Small businesses are eligible for a federal health care tax credit if they have fewer than 25 full-time-equivalent employees for the tax year, pay employees an average of less than $50,000 per year and contribute at least 50 percent of their employees' premium cost. Employers with 10 or fewer full-time-equivalent employees with wages averaging $25,000 or less per year are eligible for the maximum amount of tax credits.

"The tax credits available to small business through Covered California make quality coverage more affordable," said Lee. "For example, a beauty shop with 10 full-time employees and total wages of $250,000 that purchases insurance through Covered California's SHOP may be eligible for a $35,000 tax credit in 2014. We know that the tax credit is meaningful for a lot of small business that have been struggling to obtain quality, affordable coverage for their employees."

In addition to purchasing coverage on the Covered California website, Covered California SHOP plans are sold through licensed agents who are trained and certified by Covered California. Since registration opened in August, more than 22,000 licensed agents have signed up to become certified to sell Covered California products, with more than 7,000 agents currently certified and available to help individual consumers and small employers in the Covered California marketplace.

The increased website functionality also includes a number of new features available for the Certified Insurance Agent community, such as the ability to create an online profile for an individual consumer or small employer; the ability to start and submit an application on behalf of an individual or small employer; and, the ability to process and manage employer online enrollment applications for SHOP.

The Affordable Care Act includes provisions to encourage small businesses to offer health coverage for their employees by making insurance more affordable and easier to purchase. Covered California created SHOP to facilitate the purchase of affordable health insurance for small-business owners.

SHOP is a second marketplace—separate from the one for individuals—and is designed to give employers and their employees more options for health coverage. Using this marketplace, small-business owners can shop for health insurance in ways that offer convenience and choice, which is comparable to how large companies shop for employee health insurance today.

Health insurance companies participating in SHOP include: Blue Shield of California, Chinese Community Health Plan, Health Net, Kaiser Permanente, Sharp Health Plan and Western Health Advantage. These plans will be sold through Certified Licensed Insurance Agents trained and certified by Covered California.

Small businesses are not required to buy insurance for their employees. SHOP is completely voluntary, and small businesses will not be penalized for non-participation. Small businesses can enroll in a SHOP plan year round.

Covered California is the state's marketplace for the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Covered California, in partnership with the California Department of Health Care Services, was charged with creating a new health insurance marketplace in which individuals and small businesses can get access to affordable health insurance plans. With coverage starting in 2014, Covered California helps individuals determine whether they are eligible for premium assistance that is available on a sliding-scale basis to reduce insurance costs or whether they are eligible for low-cost or no-cost Medi-Cal. Consumers can then compare health insurance plans and choose the plan that works best for their health needs and budget. Small businesses can purchase competitively priced health insurance plans and offer their employees the ability to choose from an array of plans and may qualify for federal tax credits.

Covered California is an independent part of the state government whose job is to make the new market work for California's consumers. It is overseen by a five-member board appointed by the governor and the legislature. For more information, visit www.CoveredCA.com.

Diabetic Drugs May Be Dangerous To Your Health

New guide sheds light on the dangers of diabetic drugs and why doctors prescribe them anyway. You could be at risk!

A free guide has just been released that reveals why current therapy may make your condition worse. If you are frustrated that your blood sugars don't budge and continue to rise despite your drugs this guide is a must have. To receive your free guide entitled "Diabetic Ignorance: How Drug Companies, The Food Industry, and some Drs. set you up for Failure" call today 1-559-627-2225 or go to www.visalia-diabetesreport.com Dr. Ruben Garcia, DC

Shannon Ranch School Wins Toro Grant

Shannon Ranch Elementary School in Visalia received the most votes and won first place in The Toro Company's "Ready. Set. GROW!" grant program.

The school will use its $7,000 grant to install a drip irrigation system to help efficiently irrigate the school garden. The area is used by students throughout the year to learn about life sciences, and will serve as a model on smart irrigation practices for the surrounding community. (Shannon Ranch's winning video can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcMhpzJmnoo.)

The new Toro community grant program awarded $15,000 to growers and non-profits that promote sustainable practices in agricultural communities across America.

"We created this grant program to give back to the community and help support growers and organizations in their effort to apply more efficient and sustainable agricultural practices," said Judson McNeil of the Toro Giving Program. "Each organization deserves to win, and we're thrilled to help in some way with their efforts."

Project FINE - Colorful Growers took second for a $4,000 grant. Armed Services YMCA at Camp Pendleton and North Louisiana Agri-Business Council each receive a $2,000 grant.

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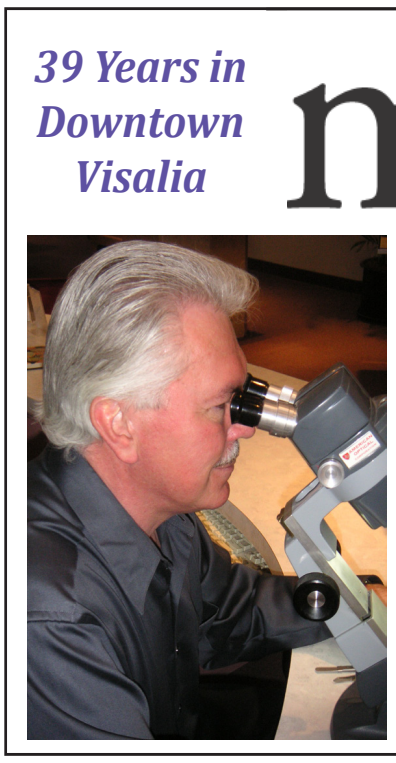

Galaxy

Continued from p. 1

ed, he said. "This is reaction to a demand and not something we created."

Many family restaurants allow patrons to drink at their tables, even with children present, he said. He cited Chuck E. Cheese, Time Out Pizza, Disneyland and California Adventure as examples.

The Tulare Galaxy has been instrumental in boosting Tulare Outlet Center visits as it draws visitors from throughout the region, Taylor said.

"This would help direct even more visitors from the tri-county area to Tulare," he said. He reported he was not aware of other theaters in the area exploring the idea, but "it's just a matter of time."

Currently 32 theaters, including Galaxy in Atascadero, serve alcohol, according to the National Association of Theatre Owners.

'Really bad plan'

"I think it's a really bad plan," Tulare resident Vicki Gilson told commissioners.

The difference between a restaurant and a movie theater is that movies are shown in the dark, she said.

Anyone who has attended concerts knows the danger of people "sloshing beer all over you," she added.

Council Member Carlton Jones, stressing he was not speaking for or against the item, told commissioner he had used social media to asked the public what they thought about the idea.

Of the nearly 300 people replying, he said about 80 percent were against the idea and 20 percent for.

"There are a couple of investors here and it would be nice to hear them speak on why we need to make this change," he said.

Frank Rimkus, chairman of Galaxy Theatres, which is based in Sherman Oaks, said alcohol has been "a popular asked for item for some time."

Like Taylor, Rimkus said the move to sell alcohol will help the business maintain its competitive edge.

"If we don't do this, someone else will and when they do it's going to affect business; it's going to affect revenues," he said.

Under current law, theaters can serve beer, wine and spirits, but the company is asking to only serve beer and wine and his staff will be vigilant in making sure rules are followed, Rimkus said.

"We have everything to lose and nothing to gain by not being on top of our game," he said, reporting state Alcohol Beverage Control sends "mystery shoppers" to determine whether theaters are complying with the law. If not, there are stiff penalties, he said.

Addressing Gilson's concern about the darkness in theaters, Rimkus said the theater is dark only from the position of looking at the screen.

Ambient light coming off screens is quite bright, allowing employees who make regular checks to see what's going on when their backs are to the screen, he said.

"It's quite easy to spot who's drinking alcohol – you're drinking out of a different glass; you can see immediately," he said.

Beer prices will range from $6 to $7 dollars and wine from $8 to $10 per glass, which does not encourage heavy drinking, Rimkus and Taylor said.

Commissioner Richard Nunes agreed.

"I'm not going to pay $7 for a beer and another beer and another beer," Nunes said.

Sharron Minnick said that while serving alcohol makes sense from a business standpoint but "if people around me are drinking alcohol, it does make me uncomfortable."

At places like Chuck E. Cheese, there is light and you can see people's faces, she said.

Jose Ruiz Salas said selling alcohol sends a message that it's OK to drink at a movie and people will sneak it in. He also expressed concern about young people of drinking age pouring their drinks into cups of those who are not.

Commissioner Sandi Miller thanked members of the public who spoke and reported that she, like Jones, also conducted a survey, but in her case she found no opposition to allowing the sale of alcohol.

"I think Galaxy Theatres have done a great job in Tulare," Miller said. "They are responsible people. It's a responsible ownership."

Commissioner Chuck Miguel asked if alcohol was going to be allowed for every movie. "I wouldn't want it in Disney films," he said.

Rimkus said it will be allowed in all movies. "We don't serve; they have to come and get it; they can take it to any auditorium," he said.

Commissioner Deanna Rocha said she was concerned that alcohol would be available for purchase before noon.

Miller said that is not any different from having champagne or another drink at Sunday brunch.

"I'm not necessarily bothered by the time," she said. "I'm relieved to hear about the regulations, the control and the monitoring that's going to be put into place."

Miguel, speaking to Rocha's concern, said he does shift work "so my noon is not your noon. My breakfast time is not your breakfast time."

Commissioner Patrick Isherwood said he liked the fact city planners were calling for a 12-month review, a fact Rocha later said prompted her to support the permit.

Chairman Jeff Killion noted the planning staff had reviewed the project with Tulare Police Chief Jerry Breckinridge, who recommended adding the review requirement to the permit.

Story courtesy www.TulareVoice.com
The www.TulareVoice.com site is an online journal published by Tulare News LLC.

NISSAN
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For the third time, Nissan of Visalia has been recognized as a recipient of Nissan Motor Company's Owner First Award of Excellence. Nissan of Visalia is the only winner of this prestigious award in Northern and Central California, and one of only 20 dealers in the Western Region's 8 state territory. The award recognizes a dealership and its employees for delivering the highest standards of customer satisfaction, sales and loyalty.

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– Don Groppetti
Owner, Groppetti Automotive Family

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Cats

Continued from p. 1

deal with a number of stray cats living around the museum. Colleen Monfross and Dianne Dunbar volunteered for the Feral Cat Committee with the SPCA and responded to her call. They assessed the situation and estimated a total of 100 abandoned or feral cats throughout the park. King, Monfross and Dunbar came up with a plan to control the colonies using the TNR program.

The Trap, Neuter and Release Program traps feral and abandoned cats, tests them for disease, then sterilizes them. The cat is then vaccinated and treated with flea medication and released back into the park. A group of volunteers monitors and feeds the cats once or twice a day which enables them to determine when the colony has become stable. Once a colony is stabilized, they slowly start decreasing in numbers. The theory is, if you maintain the original colony through neutering and releasing, other cats will stay out of the park and their numbers will decrease.

Trapping and killing costs the county about $185 per cat while TNR is free and humane.

Colleen and Dianne started the TNR Program in Mooney's Grove in June. They did the trapping and caring for the cats for free and Valley Oak SPCA picked up the medical costs. At the same time, Monfross pursued getting a TNR pilot project officially approved by the county. She didn't need their approval, but thought this project could be replicated all over the Valley. John Hess, administrative analyst for Tulare County, told her to make a proposal and arranged a meeting in early September between her group and high level staff with the county. If everything went as planned, the pilot project would be presented to the Tulare County Supervisors and put up for a vote. During this time, the Mooney's Grove staff and Tulare County Parks Manager Neil Pilegard were told to stop trapping and killing the cats.

That's when everything started to unravel.

Cats of the 'Museum Colony' eat canned food.

Insiders at the park informed Monfross that King and Pilegard had started trapping again. She was told that King trapped and killed two mother cats with her kittens. One mother was trapped with her litter of two-week-old kittens and all were put down. The other mother was trapped with two of her kittens. One kitten escaped and has been adopted by a ranger, but the other kitten was killed along with her mother. Two other kittens died because they weren't old enough to survive without their mother and could not be caught. Both mothers had been taken care of by the volunteers while they waited for the kittens to mature so to be adopted out. The mothers were going to be fixed.

Monfross went to Tulare County Historical Museum in Mooney's Grove to confront King about her violating the moratorium on trapping and to express her feelings about trapping new mothers. Monfross informed King that she was calling the police to file an animal cruelty report against her. When Monfross told King to stop trapping she was forceful, direct and the conversation was unpleasant for both of them. But museum patrons were milling about and neither they, nor the staff, heard any raised voices, or even their conversation.

Later that day, Monfross received a call from the Visalia Police Department wanting to discuss allegations that she made threats of bodily harm against King. They said she had threatened to beat her up once she King stepped foot off the park property. Monfross, being a 52-year-old woman, and King being a young fit woman in her early thirties, was quite surprised to hear the allegations.

After King and Monfross' confrontation, the meeting between the county and volunteers was canceled with no explanation. Valley Oak SPCA stopped offering their services because the Mooney's Grove's cats had become "too political." A week later, Pilegard laid off two museum employees who had worked there for years, telling them to leave immediately. They have since been replaced by a new employee and a volunteer. Monfross was informed by the Visalia Police Department that neither she, nor any of the other volunteers, could return to the park. She challenged that statement and a higher-up in the police department called Pilegard and informed him that they weren't doing anything illegal and he could not lawfully keep citizens out of a public park.

The county has now resumed trapping and killing the cats in earnest according to an insider in the Valley Oak SPCA. Ironically, the cats are being put down in the same place where, only a month before, they were being vaccinated and fixed.

VOLUNTEERS STABILIZE COLONIES

I met Dr. Weber by the End of the Trail Statue in Mooney's Grove Park. It was the day after Thanksgiving and he was filling in for another volunteer who was out of town. The weather had turned overcast and colder than I had expected, so he pulled a fleece jacket out of his car fittingly covered with cat hair.

We walked along the leaf-strewn path to the museum cat colony. With only five cats, this colony had been stabilized through the TNR program. There was only one gray male cat that had not been fixed, "But we'll catch him. The dominant male keeps chasing him away," said Dr. Weber.

The dominant male of the museum colony was born in the park and affectionately named Scotty Jr. after his dad, Scotty Sr. The dad, who had been abandoned, was named after his breed of cat. "Do you know what a Scottish Fold is?" he asked. I learned that a Scottish Fold is a breed of cat whose ears are permanently folded down flat that makes them look quaintly annoyed all of the time. As the rest of the cats ran to Dr. Weber, Scotty Jr. kept his distance behind the fence and waited for his personal can of food that he did not share.

Scotty Jr. waits for a private can of food. Scotty is the dominant male of the 'Museum Colony.'

After the museum we headed to the much larger bridge colony. This colony was about 80 percent stabilized and had around 20 cats. Dr. Kuswa, owner of Animal Companion Medical Center, had stepped forward to volunteer her services after the SPCA pulled out. "Dr. Kuswa is ready to proceed with sterilization and vaccinating, the only thing standing in her way is the county. Dr. Kuswa doesn't want to operate on the cats just to have the county turn around and kill them," said Dr. Weber.

It was at the bridge colony a few weeks ago that Dr. Weber saw his favorite cat, Scotty Sr., amble towards him, but it was not a happy reunion. He knew right away there was something wrong because Scotty's face was swollen and he was so far from his territory. The doctor had a recovery crate with him and set it up, but he knew cats never willingly went inside. So he went back to his car to get his work gloves knowing that if Scotty were injured he would probably bite him. When the doctor got back to the bridge, Scotty had crawled into the crate and Dr. Weber could see blood on the floor. When Dr. Weber got Scotty to the vet the x-ray showed that he had been shot through the eye and the pellet had lodged in his brain.

Scotty Jr.'s father was the dominant male before him. His death is the reason the volunteers asked Pilegard to post signs informing park users of penal code 597. The code states that, "Every person who maliciously and intentionally maims, mutilates, tortures, wounds or kills a living animal is guilty of a crime punishable by imprisonment or a fine." Several cats and birds have been killed by pellet guns, but having Scotty Sr. put down motivated the volunteers to push even harder for the signs, but their request fell on deaf ears.

Sadly, Dr. Weber feels like everything the volunteers do to improve the park and save the wildlife falls on deaf ears. "The confrontation with Amy completely changed the dynamics. It changed the focus away from the well-being of the cats, and gave the county a reason to put a stop to the program," he said. Pilegard doesn't believe that TNR works and doesn't want cats in the park. "Why else would the county spend money on something they could get for free?" mused Dr. Weber.

Dr. Kuswa added that, "Anytime you have food and water you will have cats. Obviously at Mooney's Grove there is food and water." The philosophy behind TNR is that when a cat colony is maintained, that colony does not grow and will probably shrink. If, on the other hand, the colony is destroyed, it creates a vacuum and a new larger group of cats will take their place.

Since June, more than 24 cats have gone through the TNR program and more than 20 kittens have been rehabilitated so they can be adopted out.

Back at the bridge colony, Dr. Weber was feeding a group of 20 cats. "These cats are abandoned, not feral," he said. The cats jockeyed for space rubbing up against him, eager for his attention. In between emptying cans of cat food he tossed dry cat food out to the protesting ducks and geese. "I buy dry food with extra vitamins and minerals for the birds. "In the spring, it's so beautiful here with all the chicks. It's just a celebration of life - just remarkable."

Dr. Weber finished putting out cans of food and making little piles of dry food so none of the cats were left out. He made sure to collect all the cans in a bag so he could take them out of the park. "I don't want a kitten to smell the food and get caught in the trash can," he said.

I sat on the rocky ledge watching Dr. Weber interact with one of his favorite cats. Even though he was done with his work for the day we lingered in the company of a particularly fat and bossy goose and five or six well fed cats.

"All we are trying to do is save them, that's all. I think that is what is so hard. You never know when it's the last time….." – but he could not finish his sentence.

THE COUNTY'S RESPONSE

The official response from the county is that they have used the same practices of managing the feral animal population at Mooney's Grove for 20 years.

"These practices continue to include trapping feral cats and other animals. As has been practice for 20 years, Parks staff provides any trapped feral cats to Tulare County Animal Control. Due to the issues related to fleas, illegal dumping of

Continued on p. 7»

Cats

Continued from p. 6

animals, and the safe use of the park by the public for recreation purposes, the county is not considering any other method of managing the feral animal population at the park at this time." Despite everything that has happened, Dr. Kuswa resumed the group's efforts two weeks ago to save the cats. Dr. Kuswa met with Pilegard to once more explain the cost savings and logic behind the TNR Program. "He wasn't very receptive," she said. "He is very unreceptive of the idea of fixing cats and rereleasing them in the park. Once they are removed, he wants to keep them out. He wants the cats placed in homes."

Dr. Weber stated, "Once the county has trapped a cat, it's dead." No one wants to adopt a half-grown, wild cat.

A cat from the 'Bridge Colony.'

Pilegard also mentioned the problem of fleas and rabies brought in by the cats. Dr. Kuswa explained to him that the cats were vaccinated against rabies and treated for fleas so that the TNR cats would make the park a safer and healthier place for the public.

> *"My clients are voters and I have filled out about six petitions. That's 90 votes which could definitely swing an election. The county supervisors should take note."*
>
> *— Robert Fishback, Visalia optometrist*

Citing the hazards of having cats in the park, Pilegard quoted the California Department of Fish and Game and the Audubon Society. The frustration level in her voice was escalating when she said, "Mooney's Grove is not a delicate ecosystem. The Galapagos Islands - yes. Mooney's Grove - no."

Pilegard feels the same way about the ducks and geese as he does the cats, that they are a nuisance and a health risk to the public. His preference would be to get rid of all the birds that use Mooney's Grove pond. To reduce the population of geese, Pilegard hunts the birds on the weekends with a bow and arrow. On one occasion, he injured one of the geese and told the park rangers to keep a look out for it. A park employee discussed his hunting practices and explained that there were other methods of population control other than shooting them with arrows.

He was not receptive.

Right now, the cat population is not an active problem because the county is just putting them down. But Dr. Kuswa pointed out that the current public sentiment is to use nonlethal methods to deal with feral and abandoned cats humanely. "If you love cats, you don't want them to be put away. If you hate cats then you don't want your tax money spent on them."

Dr. Weber said, "I just wish they would work with us and appreciate our efforts."

That sentiment was echoed by Dr. Robert Fishback, a Visalia optometrist. He has petitions on his front counter for his clients to sign to save Mooney's Grove cats. "My clients are voters and I have filled out about six petitions. That's 90 votes which could definitely swing an election. The county supervisors should take note."

TNR Advocates' Petition:

"Recently, volunteers from Valley Oak SPCA were asked by the County to address the abandoned cat issue at Mooney Grove Park. The volunteers began a Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program at the park at NO COST TO THE COUNTY. The program includes spay/neuter, vaccinations, testing for communicable disease, euthanasia in the event of disease, flea and mite treatment and deworming. Since June, 19 kittens have been removed to foster homes and 19 adult cats have gone through the program and returned back to their colony at the park. This approach provides a sterile, stable, healthy colony that will discourage other abandoned cats from coming in. The VOSPCA volunteers will feed and monitor the colonies on a permanent basis."

Go to ourvalleyvoice.com to download petition & view more

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Visalia Tackles Homelessness

The city of Visalia, faith-based organizations and service providers are coming together to deal with the issue of homelessness in Visalia. A broad-based outreach plan kicks off this month with faith-based partners to discourage individuals from giving money to panhandlers with the "Change That Counts" campaign, urging support instead for those who help the homeless.

The campaign will use a variety of different mediums – a website, social media outlets, flyers, bus billboards and presentations – to encourage individuals to give their money to service providers to secure real help for the truly homeless.

"Many of us don't know how to respond when we see a person on the street asking for money. We may feel sympathetic, intimidated, uncomfortable or even pressured to give," said Visalia Mayor Steve Nelsen. "Giving money seems like a compassionate act and it may help people for the moment, but it often encourages destructive habits or stops them from seeking out help that could actually improve their lives. Instead, give your donation to those who help the homeless get off the streets and take steps to change their lives forever."

Visalia Police Lt. Steven Phillips said it's easy to confuse panhandlers with those who are truly homeless. "But, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, most panhandlers have places to live, and most homeless people do not panhandle."

Homelessness is a communitywide problem, requiring communitywide involvement. Faith-based organizations will be involved in getting the message out to their congregations that change can come with their help. A variety of mediums will be used - from flyers to websites, social media and presentations with faith-based partners and service providers on the impact of panhandling and how to truly help the homeless.

In addition, a list of resources for the homeless is available on the city's website with services for men, women and children who are homeless.

Outgoing Mayor Amy Shuklian and Code Enforcement Officer Tracy Robertshaw were featured on the November broadcast of "Visalia Today," talking about steps the city has taken to deal with homelessness and related issues.

For more information on how you can give help those who help the homeless with your money, go to www.helpvisaliahomeless.com. An online list of service providers gives avenues of options for your donation. If your faith-based or service club organization or business is interested in assisting with this effort, contact Community Relations Manager Nancy Loliva at nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us or 713-4535.

NEXT DEADLINE
13 December, 2013

Cold Weather Conditions Move into Tulare County

Tulare County is expected to experience sub-freezing temperatures in the low elevation populated areas this week. The National Weather Service (NWS) has placed a Hard Freeze Watch in effect for Tulare County through Friday morning.

Tulare County Office of Emergency Services is closely monitoring reports issued by NWS, and is advising residents to take precautionary measures against the cold. To protect yourself in extremely cold weather wear several layers of clothing, travel with caution, and be alert for the symptoms of exposure. Monitor family members and those around you who are at greatest risk from exposure, such as seniors, young children and people with underlying illnesses or chronic conditions.

- Maintain a heated environment inside your home of at least 68 degrees during the day and evening; 63 degrees at night.
- Be aware that space heaters can be a fire risk. Choose heaters with an automatic shut-off switch and non-glowing elements. Follow directions for safe use.
- Do not use an oven or outdoor heating device to heat your home, as these devices produce deadly carbon monoxide.
- When exposed to cold weather outside, wear layers of warm, dry clothing, including a head covering and gloves. Remove any wet clothing promptly.
- Drink warm fluids such as cider, hot chocolate or soup. Avoid caffeinated or alcoholic beverages, which cause your body to lose heat more rapidly.
- Maintain good nutrition and get plenty of rest.
- Check with your doctor when using prescription drugs. Some medications may lower tolerance to levels of cold.

Keep animals safe by moving them indoors or provide adequate shelter to keep them warm. Make sure they have access to unfrozen water.

Travel with caution and check road conditions before departing.

Check on family members or neighbors who are elderly or have special needs. If you live alone, keep in contact with friends and family.

If you are 65 or older, are disabled, or have a chronic illness, talk to you doctor about getting a flu shot every year.

If you do not have heat, go to a friend or family member's home, warming center or local shelter. Common symptoms of cold related health problems include still muscles, puffy face, mental confusion, slowed breathing, poor physical condition, numbness, dizziness, shivering, waxy or discolored skin. If you need emergency medical attention, call your physician on 9-1-1 immediately.

For more information on cold weather preparedness, including where to locate warming centers, log onto www.tularecounty.ca.gov/oes. To sign up for AlertTC, log on to www.tularecounty.ca.gov and click on "AlertTC."

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Lot 15	Tulare Business Park	1.43 Acres	$ 350,000
157 Acres Industrial Zoned Land			$ 8,276,400
5 acres of land for ground lease Industrial zoned			$2,500 rent

5 Acres (66 Unites Approved) Multi Family Development	$1,250,000
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CBD Tulare 9,000 SF Office 157 South K FOR SALE	$425,000
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New Mental Health Clinic Emphasizes Wellness, Recovery and Resiliency

TIMOTHY DURICK, PSY.D.

According to the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH), about one in four adults suffers from a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year. Additionally, mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and Canada. However, between 70 and 90 percent of the individuals who are treated for their illness experience a reduction in symptoms and an improved quality of life. Community members in Tulare County now have a centralized location as an option for mental health services and alcohol and other drug treatment; the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency recently opened its new Visalia Adult Integrated Clinic and Visalia Recovery Center (VAIC/VRC).

Formerly the Fairway Market, the VAIC/VRC building is centrally located in Visalia to provide easy access. It sits on the corner of Santa Fe Street and Tulare Avenue, near downtown Visalia and the Visalia Bus Depot, and is close to several of the Tulare County Mental Health supportive housing programs. The building was restructured to house mental health services and alcohol and other drug treatment staff under one roof. The new building will also house the Psychiatric Emergency Team, Mental Health Court mental health staff, some TulareWORKs staff, and a National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) community team. Also, this new facility provides space to begin offering peer-delivered services to clients, such as service orientation, peer-led groups, and community transition assistance. Peers in the process of recovery are excellent role models and have much experiential knowledge to share with other peers in dealing with common concerns and problems.

With the new location comes a new service delivery model. The county is redesigning its mental health service delivery to emphasize wellness, recovery, and resiliency. Services will meet the consumer where they are in their wellness and recovery process. Staff are forming six teams to support consumers in their wellness and recovery: an Outreach and Engagement Team, which works in the community providing outreach to individuals who experience difficulty in seeking out and accessing mental health services; a Welcoming and Accessibility Team that focuses on ensuring all consumers receive timely access from the start, which allows the Visalia Adult Integrated Clinic to accept walk-ins throughout the day; two mental health treatment teams that focus on consumers who are at vulnerable points in their journey of wellness and recovery and need intensive and frequent services; a Recovery-Oriented Service Team, which focuses on mental illness education, increasing wellness and recovery supports, and teaching resiliency techniques to consumers; and a Peer-Delivered Services Team hosted by peers. This team approach enables staff and peers to focus on the unique needs of the approximately 1,600 consumers served quarterly at VAIC.

While treatment teams focus on the unique needs of the consumers, the integration of services allows for a focus on the diverse support needs of the consumers. In this new location, consumers can receive mental health and crisis services, assistance with TulareWORKs and SSI benefits, substance abuse prevention and treatment services, peer support and mentorship, and advocacy through NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Navigating multiple services can be cumbersome and frustrating, which in turn can exacerbate symptoms and ultimately lead to consumers not seeking the needed services. The one-stop approach offered by the integration of services is crucial for consumers with complex needs that span several different programs.

Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income. Mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character, or poor upbringing. Mental illnesses are treatable. If you or a loved one is suffering from mental illness, please reach out. VAIC is open Monday through Friday, from 8:00am to 6pm and walk-ins are welcome.

The new Visalia Recovery Center. located at the intersection of Santa Fe Street and Tulare Avenue.

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Attending the Plaza Drive Interchange Opening (l-r): John Rowland, Engineer (Peters Engineering); Todd Lambert, Engineer (TRC); Justina Conklin, Sr. Engineer (TRC); Fred Lampe, Project Mgr. (City of Visalia); Adam Ennis, Public Works Dir.(City of Visalia); Mark Imbriani, VP/Project Mgr.(TRC); Visalia Mayor Amy Shuklian; Glenn Armstrong, Engineer (TRC).

Plaza Drive Interchange Completion Celebrated

On November 19, Visalia city officials, engineers from TRC Companies, Inc., and other dignitaries celebrated the grand opening of the improved State Route 198/Plaza Drive Interchange. TRC performed the planning and design for this $26 million project, which will promote economic growth across Tulare County by improving access to employment centers and enhancing the movement of goods.

"TRC is proud to have been part of the Plaza Drive Widening and Interchange Project," said Mark Imbriani, TRC vice president and project manager. "The wider roadway and enlarged interchange will alleviate traffic congestion and provide better access to Visalia's Industrial Park, which houses many major product distribution centers serving the Western U.S. With better traffic flow, fuel consumption will be reduced and air quality in the area will improve. Travel time for motorists will also be reduced, and safety will be enhanced."

This major public works project, started by the city of Visalia in 2008, widened Plaza Drive from two to four or six lanes over a distance of 1.5 miles between Airport Drive on the south and Goshen Avenue on the north. Auxiliary lanes were constructed on SR 198 between Plaza Drive and SR 99. The work included widening the structure overcrossing SR 198 from three to seven lanes to improve traffic circulation and capacity. Four retaining walls were required to minimize impacts to a hotel, park and high-risk utility fiber-optic and gas lines.

TRC has worked with the city of Visalia since 2000 on three interchange projects on the SR 198 corridor. The Plaza Drive Interchange project won the 2013 Project of the Year Award in the Economic Development Category from the Tulare County Association of Governments.

Plaza Drive Interchange in Visalia

Visalia Rescue Mission Serves 300 Thanksgiving Dinners

The Visalia Rescue Mission (VRM), along with about 150 volunteers, served approximately 300 Thanksgiving dinners at its Annual Thanksgiving Banquet, according to Jessica Cavale, VRM director of development.

The annual meal, which featured live music, desserts and a traditional Thanksgiving meal with "all the fixings," was held at the mission's chapel/community center at 741 N. Santa Fe, Visalia, from 11 am to 1pm on Thanksgiving.

The Visalia Rescue Mission is a local Christian-based, non-profit that serves the local community by providing a homeless shelter for men, women and children, sleeping on average 150 people each night and serving three meals a day, 365 days a year. The VRM is currently serving approximately 515 meals each day, and served more than 183,000 meals in 2012.

The mission operates a nine-month recovery program for men and women, which includes a mentoring program, life-skill training and job internship programs. The mission, which relies heavily on volunteers from the local communities to support its work, is funded entirely by donations from local businesses, organizations and individuals.

The VRM owns and operates Rescued Treasures Thrift Store on Mooney Boulevard and Simply Chic Boutique on Main Street, both in Visalia. All proceeds from these stores directly benefit the VRM. The mission also has a Feed the Hungry Garden, a gym and a four-plex transitional housing unit and Oval Park revamp, in conjunction with the City of Visalia.

The new VRM Community Center was built to benefit the local community and provide case management and counseling services. Since its opening in September 2012, 100 individuals who were previously homeless have found housing and been employed.

Cost of Classic Thanksgiving Dinner Down for 2013

You may have had a little more money in your pocket this year after buying all the ingredients for your Thanksgiving dinner. The American Farm Bureau Federation's 28th annual informal price survey of classic items found on the Thanksgiving Day dinner table indicates the average cost of this year's feast for 10 was $49.04, a 44-cent price decrease from last year's average of $49.48.

The AFBF survey shopping list includes turkey, bread stuffing, sweet potatoes, rolls with butter, peas, cranberries, a relish tray of carrots and celery, pumpkin pie with whipped cream, and beverages of coffee and milk, all in quantities sufficient to serve a family of 10. There is also plenty for leftovers.

The big ticket item – a 16-pound turkey – came in at $21.76 this year. That was roughly $1.36 per pound, a decrease of about 3 cents per pound, or a total of 47 cents per whole turkey, compared to 2012. The whole bird was the biggest contributor to the final total, showing the largest price decrease.

Behavioral Services Spreads Pilot Program to 21 Local Schools

This fall, the Tulare County Office of Education's Behavior Health Services (BHS) program expanded the reach of its successful Intervention Resource Classroom (IRC), first piloted at Lindsay High School last semester. The Lindsay High School pilot, known as the Green Zone, is a safe and highly supportive classroom where students with identified behavior management issues can go when they feel overwhelmed.

In the Green Zone, students learn strategies for mitigating the stress they feel in their regular academic classes and obtain the one-on-one academic support so that they can be successful in their core academic subjects. At the November meeting of the Tulare County Board of Education, Dr. Eileen Whelan, administrator of the Behavioral Services Program, and staff members Tiffany Stark and Ryan Tanney, shared the promising data collected from students in the program. While the sample size was small, administrators recorded a substantial decrease in problem behavior and suspensions, and an increase in attendance and parent participation in the program.

BHS now operates 17 IRCs in schools across the county, with plans to open four more sites in January. The students served by IRCs include those in elementary, middle and high schools, as well as TCOE Court/Community Schools and one center for the severely handicapped. About half of the 130 students served in the IRCs this fall have not previously received any type of special education services; more than one-third have not received mental health services.

Dr. Whelan reports that the IRCs were designed in response to individual school/district needs. Twelve of the IRCs are standard classrooms, welcoming students to attend as needed. Five of the IRCs serve as "push-in" or "pull-out" resources for behavior, academic and social support. At these sites, behavioral intervention specialists work as needed with students in their own classrooms. Throughout the county, students are learning social skills utilizing several research-based curricula.

Tulare County Rest Area Receives Environmental Certification

As part of its effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save taxpayer money, Caltrans announced that the Philip S. Raine Roadside Rest Area on SR 99 in Tulare County has received the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification, the highest possible environmental rating by the United State Green Building Council (USGBC).

"This platinum certification represents the deep commitment of Caltrans to delivering not only safety and mobility, but also sustainability in California's transportation system," said California State Transportation Agency Secretary Brian Kelly.

The Raine facility near Tipton, one of 233 buildings in California to achieve this milestone, serves more than four million visitors annually. Caltrans has previously earned LEED Gold certification for its Los Angeles office and LEED Silver certification for the district office in Marysville.

The Philip S. Raine Roadside Rest Area

Caltrans replaced the rest area's landscaping with drought tolerant and native plants, which, along with improved irrigation, will save an estimated 12 million gallons of water annually that can be put to good use by Central Valley farmers.

During construction, Caltrans sent all construction waste to recyclers instead of the landfill and incorporated regional materials from within 500 miles of the project.

The following upgrades transformed the Raine facility into an energy-efficient rest area that will save taxpayer money and better serve travelers:

- High-efficiency lighting, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning units;
- Natural day lighting of interior spaces;
- A shade canopy with photovoltaic panels;
- Healthy indoor air quality by eliminating dust, moisture and contaminants from interior spaces.

USGBC is recognized as the country's leading authority on green building standards.

The Raine rest area was originally constructed in 1965, with upgrades added in 1984. The improved facility reopened in November 2012, after completing an $8.5 million rehabilitation that included environmental upgrades and compliance with the American Disabilities Act.

Elections

Continued from p. 1

registration," said Wallis, adding that the cost is divided by how many elections and ballot measures there are on the ballot.

"You might have a memorial district, a school board and a city election," said Woodard.

The math involved in determining what boards, candidates and government bodies can be staggering.

"I try to make it as equitable as possible," said Wallis, before explaining how costs are determined. "If there are 10 districts on the ballot, you would get charged one-tenth of the cost.

That would be simple, if there were only a few different ballots, but district boundaries overlap, making cost assessment a complex puzzle.

"The cost of the election varies every time because of how many contests end up on a ballot," she continued. "Just because it costs a district $2,000, next time depending on what else is on the ballot, it could go up or down. If you move to a state ballot (even-numbered years), you split the cost."

The November 8, 2011 Dinuba Unified School District election cost almost $25 per vote cast. The Cutler Public Utility District election the same day cost almost $26 per vote. The Visalia City Council elections that day seemed a bargain by comparison at only $10.36 per vote cast.

By contrast, the Tulare County Board of Education election held on November 6, 2012, the same time as a wide range of state and national candidates, only cost $1.63 per vote cast. And the Pixley Public Utility District election that day cost $2.02 per vote.

In addition to being less expensive, even-year elections attract more voters. The November 2012 election district average was more than 60% of eligible voters casting ballots, with some district contests attracting over 80%. The election the year before attracted an average of less than 40% of voters, with four districts having fewer than 15% of their voters participate.

So it seems that election districts in Tulare County could save a lot of money and have a better voter turnout by switching their elections to even-numbered years.

"It's not really that expensive," said Rachel Garcia, general manager of the Earlimart Public Utility District, as well as secretary and clerk of the South Tulare County Memorial District.

She explained that the public utility district didn't intend to be the only district on the ballot sent out to Earlimart voters. "The South Tulare County Memorial District also had three incumbents up for re-election, but nobody ran against them. Two (Earlimart Public Utility District) directors also ran unopposed."

But is there any concern that only 124 votes were cast in Earlimart?

"I don't think it matters," said Garcia. "It doesn't really make a difference for us," echoed Dan Vink, general manager of the Lower Tule River Irrigation District, who used the word "nominal" to describe the cost of the November 5th election. "It's not something that shows up significantly in our budget."

"It wasn't much at all," said Heather Barajas, administrative assistant at the Alpaugh Community Service District, who made our small sampling unanimous. "I would say less than $200."

Barajas didn't think the board would have any interest in switching its elections to even-numbered years. "There's not a lot of expense that we incur either way," she said.

ATTENTION BUSINESS OWNERS and MANAGERS:

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News in Brief...

CANDY CANE LANE PARADE TO AIR ON ABC30

If you missed this year' Candy Cane Lane Parade as it went down its mile-and-a-half path through downtown Visalia with 30,000 people looking on, you can see it all on ABC30's one-hour special, "The 68th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade," on Sunday, December 15, at 7pm, and on Christmas Day at 5pm.

The entire parade will also be posted online at abc30.com after the special airs on December 15. KFSN-TV ABC30 is a sponsor of the parade, which is put on by the Downtown Visalia Alliance.

This year's theme was "The 12 Days of Christmas." More than 100 entries travelled along Main Street, from high school bands to award-winning floats. The Grand Marshal was Laurie Isham, the founder of Pro-Youth in Tulare County.

OCCUPANCY RATE SLIPS FOR OCTOBER

According to amnthly lodging report by Smith Travel Research, the average occupancy rate in Tulare/Visalia area lodges saw the average occupancy rate slip in the month, going from 70.8 percent in September and 65.3 percent last year to 62.9 percent in October.

The area's average daily rate also dropped from $86.10 in September to $82.41 in the latest month, although it remained higher than $79.31 in October 2012.

With a supply of 175,987 rooms, lodges in the area reported revenues of $9.12 million in the month, down from $9.89 million the prior month but a little better than $9.11 last year.

Statewide, the average occupancy rate stood at 72.8 percent in October, up from 72.3 percent the month before and 71.5 percent a year ago.

ASSEMBLY REPUBLICANS OFFER WAY FOR CALIFORNIANS TO KEEP HEALTH PLANS

In response to the Covered California board voting unanimously to force Californians t o give up their existing plans that do not meet federal health care guidelines, Assembly Republicans announced plans to introduce legislation to allow consumers to keep their coverage for an additional year. Assembly Republicans also urged Governor Jerry Brown to call a special session of the Legislature to immediately address the failures with federal health care implementation.

"Americans were told time and time again – 'If you like your plan, you can keep it.' Our legislation would simply uphold that promise," said Assembly Republican Leader Connie Conway, of Tulare. "It's unacceptable that more Americans are losing their health care than are signing up for it through the exchanges. Democrats promised cheaper coverage for all Americans but that's not what's happening."

Assembly Republicans are currently drafting language, which would be introduced by Assembly Health Committee Vice Chair Dan Logue, that would allow any health insurance policy which was legal to sell or purchase in California prior to the effective dates specified in the Affordable Care Act to continue to be in effect through December 31, 2014. The bill will be introduced before the end of this year.

PORTERVILLE MAYOR TO PRESENT STATE OF CITY ADDRESS

Porterville Mayor Cam Hamilton will provide attendees with an update on the city of Porterville when he presents the State of the City Address at the Porterville Chamber of Commerce's First Friday Coffee at 7am on Friday, December 6, at Galaxy 9 Theatre, 631 N. Indiana.

The naming of the outstanding businesses will follow. Door prizes will be drawn as the meeting wraps up. For more information, call the chamber at 784-7502.

KAWEAH DELTA'S MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM RECEIVES ACCREDITATION

Kaweah Delta Health Care District has received accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education for its fourth Graduate Medical Education (GME) Program.

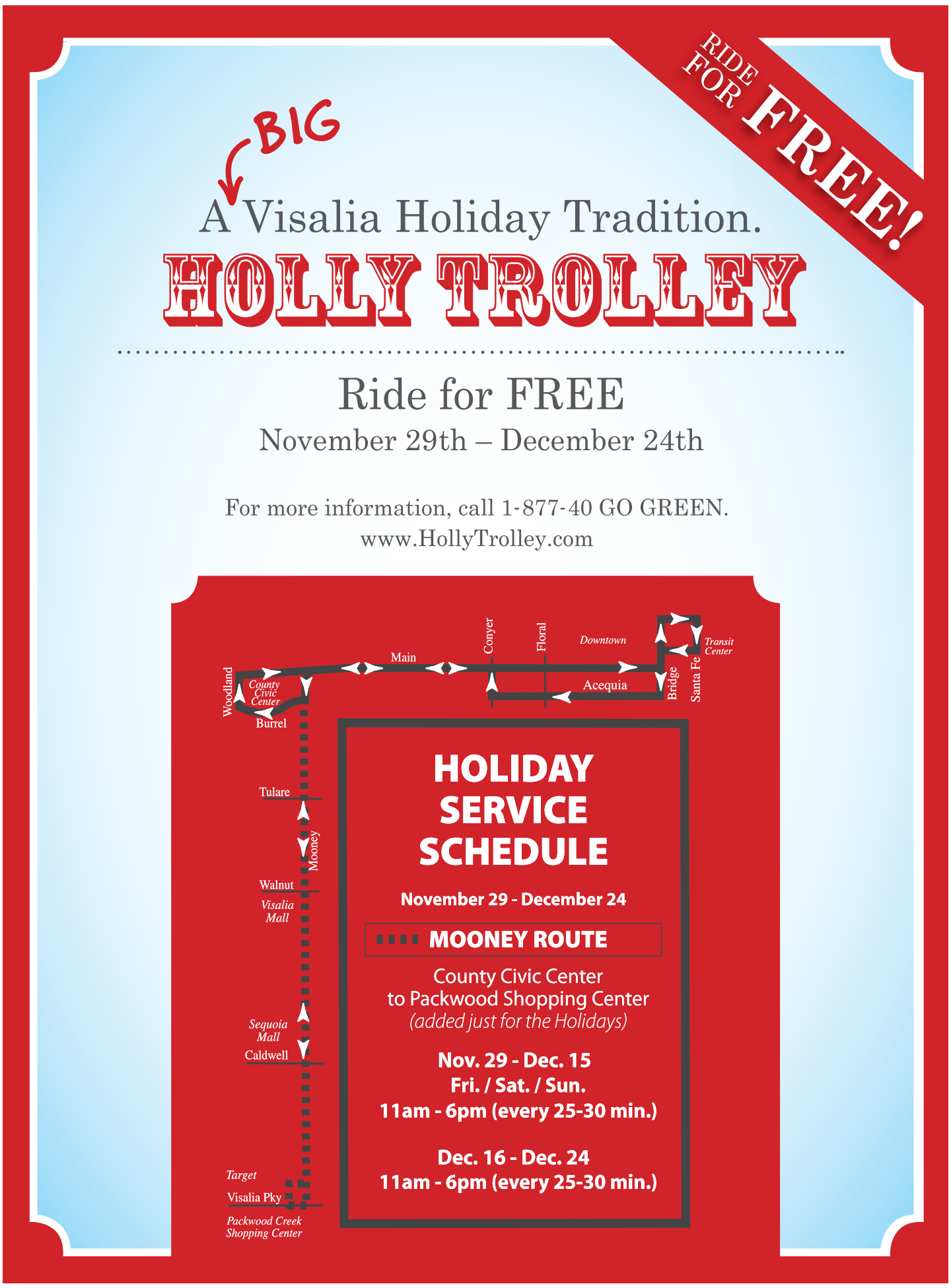
Kaweah Delta received accreditation for its Transitional Year Program. This one-year residency will orient physicians to the practice of medicine generally as they pursue a subspecialty residency in fields such as physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology or radiation oncology. This program will welcome its first class in July 2015 under the leadership of Lori Winston, MD.

The accreditation will allow the program, which is affiliated with UC Irvine, to begin recruiting physicians who have recently completed medical school and have received doctoral degrees in medicine. To select its resident physicians, Kaweah Delta will participate in the National Resident Matching Program. The matching program will provide Kaweah Delta with up to 600-700 applications from interested medical students and recent medical school graduates.

ALUMNI HALL OF FAME DEADLINE APPROACHING

The Fourth Annual Porterville College Foundation Hall of Fame Banquet will take place Saturday, March 8, 2014 at the River Island Country Club. The PC Foundation is now taking nominations for Athletics and Distinguished Alumni. The deadline for nominations is January 3.

The Alumni Hall of Fame award recognizes former Porterville College students who have made outstanding contributions to both their professions and their communities, and embody the highest standards of excellence. Nomination forms are available for download on the Porterville College Foundation website at www.portervillecollege.edu/foundation. For more information, contact Carol Bodine, foundation secretary, at 791-2319 or cbodine@portervillecollege.edu.



LOSS Team to Assist Those Impacted by Suicide

The Tulare & Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force, in partnership with the Kings County and Tulare County Sheriff's Department Coroner's Offices and the Police Chiefs' Association of Tulare County, have announced the launch of the LOSS Team to assist those impacted by suicide deaths.

The Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors, or LOSS Team, was developed by Dr. Frank Campbell of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and is comprised of volunteers who serve as a primary support and referral resource to local survivors of suicide loss. The team will function around-the-clock and respond immediately to the scene of suspected suicide deaths. Team members will interact with loss survivors and provide them with resources and support so that they do not have to feel alone as they seek to deal with the emotions that accompany loosing someone to suicide.

Law enforcement has long noted the need to support those who are impacted by suicide loss. In this year alone, Tulare County has lost 41 people and Kings County has lost 14 people to suicide.

"It is often difficult to leave suicide loss survivors without additional support and resources," said Kings County Coroner, Sgt. Tom Edmonds.

"A team of trained people to assist us in providing support to the survivors in these most tragic of situations is absolutely critical," added Tulare County Coroner, Sgt. Tom Wright.

Six years ago, Carla Sawyer, a public health nurse with Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, lost her son Bo to suicide and began a monthly support group for suicide loss survivors. That support group was supplemented by the development of a free grief and bereavement counseling program to provide therapeutic services to those struggling with loss. The advent of the LOSS Team to proactively reach out to the newly bereaved means a comprehensive range of services are now available to help interrupt the cycle of generational suicide.

"November 23 is International Survivors of Suicide Day and I cannot think of a better day to announce the launch of our new team," said Task Force Coordinator Noah Whitaker. "This day focuses on heightening awareness of the struggles faced by those who have lost someone to suicide."

"Each death forever alters the lives of friends, family members, loved-ones, co- workers and others who are directly impacted by the loss," noted Jackie Jones Siegenthaler, Kings County's Suicide Prevention coordinator.

Mary Anne Ford Sherman, director of Kings County Behavioral Health Services, commented, "The LOSS Team is possible because of the dedicated team of individuals who have trained, studied and committed to be a resource to our community."

"The development of a local LOSS Team by myriad community partners, including local law enforcement, represents the next logical step in meeting the mission and vision of the Tulare and Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force'" said Cheryl Duerksen, Ph.D., director of Tulare County Health & Human Resources Agency. "The provision of comprehensive services by trained and dedicated volunteers not only meets our public health mandate to broadly intervene in all cases of suicide, but embraces the best of our humanity as we collectively extend open arms of support during times of community tragedy."

For more information about local suicide prevention efforts, visit www.sptf.org or www.facebook.com/hope.sptf. For more information about International Survivors of Suicide Day, visit www.afsp.org/coping-with-suicide/international-survivors-of-suicide-day.

Tulare & Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force is funded by California's Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

Kaweah Delta 'Center of Excellence' in Minimally Invasive Gynecology

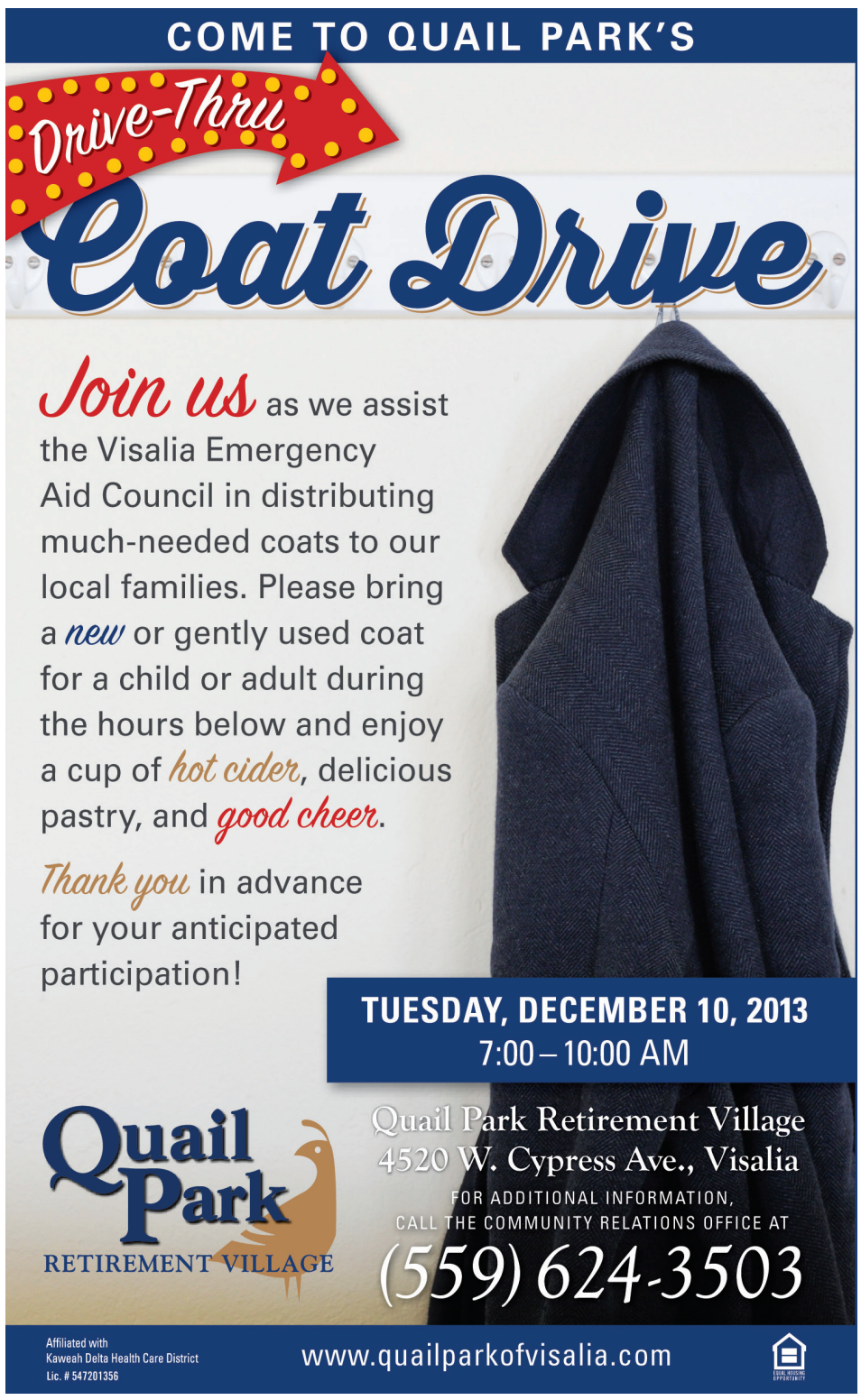
Kaweah Delta Medical Center has been designated as a Center of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecology (COEMIG) by the AAGL and Surgical Review Corporation. The AAGL promotes minimally invasive gynecologic surgery among surgeons worldwide. The designation follows an intensive on-site survey of multiple inpatient departments conducted earlier this year.

The COEMIG program sets standards for safety and quality of minimally invasive gynecologic surgeries. The program is designed to expand patient awareness of - and access to - minimally invasive gynecologic procedures performed by surgeons and facilities that have demonstrated excellence in these advanced techniques.

"This designation affirms our history of excellent gynecologic surgical outcomes," said Mark Wiseman, MD FACOG, medical director of Minimally Invasive Gynecology of Kaweah Delta Health Care District. "Joining the other Center of Excellence gynecologic surgeons and hospitals worldwide will allow us to always provide the women we care for with the best surgical options available right here in the Central Valley."

The COEMIG program was implemented to help expand awareness of and access to minimally invasive gynecological procedures for women, which are now available to treat the majority of pelvic health disorders. Minimally invasive procedures can preserve reproductive organs, minimize pain and scarring, and accelerate a return to daily living for millions of women diagnosed with common gynecological problems such as fibroids, endometriosis, stress urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse.

Some two-thirds of women experience a pelvic health problem over the course of their lifetime, usually during their childbearing years. In the past, many conditions were treated by hysterectomy.



Visalia, Exeter Open Houses Help Celebrate Holiday Season

Every Thursday in December until Christmas, Visalia and Exeter will be buzzing with downtown holiday activities.

Visalia Downtown Open House season kicks off with a special showing of "102 Dalmatians" at the Visalia Fox Theatre on December 5. Moviegoers will be treated to a skit featuring Notorious Visalians at 5pm, with the movie to follow. Tickets are $3 and can be bought at any of the clothing stores on Main Street, including Chelsea Street Boutique, or at the Fox Theatre box office.

All merchants will be open until 8pm to allow people to get their Christmas shopping done after work. Many stores will serve finger food and wine, and offer special sales. Right in the center of downtown, at 209 W. Main, will be Santa's Village, where for $5 you can get a family picture with Santa. Three horse-drawn carriages will be trotting up and down Main and Center Streets.

The price is $5 for a family of four. You can catch the carriage at either the Wells Fargo Bank or Chelsea Street Boutique.

To add to the holiday spirit, the Redwood Marching Band will play Christmas tunes all evening. Look for the special windows featuring the Downtown Snowman Festival. You can let the Downtown Alliance know whose display is your favorite through their Facebook page.

> *"This event has been going on many, many years but in the last four years it became a major event. The Business Development Committee decided to make the Open House bigger and better every year."*
>
> *— Elaine Martel, Visalia Open House organizer*

Exeter's Open House is also every Thursday in December. The Exeter event has been going on for 22 years and stores there stay open one hour later, until 9pm. Exeterites are still a little sensitive that Visalia picked the same day for their Open House, but there is plenty of cheer to go around. They also have free carriage rides and pictures with Santa for a donation at Mixture's Park, the site of the famous orange tree mural.

Mayor

Continued from p. 1

to the city council, staff and attendees.

"What you see today is a collaborative effort of God, family, friends, and colleagues and I promise to make all of you proud. In closing, I would like to share a story about my mom who recently passed away.

Mayor Nelsen and his grandchildren.

Ever since I was elected to city council my mom, whenever we talked, would say, 'Are you mayor yet?' and I would always reply, 'No, I am a council member.' In our conversations, it was like a standing joke, always the same question and always the same answer. When we moved my mom here after her massive stroke we still had the same discussion with the same answer. It was amazing to me, as her mind slowly became confused and sentences become shorter, we still had the same discussion, 'Are you the mayor yet?' 'No, Mom, I am a city council member.' Up until about a month before her passing, when she became really confused and the sentences became words, did our discussion end. I am happy to report, thanks to all of you for making this possible, 'Yes, Mom, I am mayor.' God bless all you and God bless our great city."

Tulare County Digital Photo Contest Underway

Tulare County's Information & Communications Technology Department (TCiCT) is hosting its Second Annual Digital Photography Contest. The purpose of the contest is to ask the public to help showcase the beauty of Tulare County in a variety of ways. Photographers of all ages and skill levels are eligible to participate.

There are four different classes of photography: city, agriculture, mountains and, new this year, instagram.

The photos must be images of Tulare County. Contestants may submit up to five photos total. The purpose of the contest is to involve any and all residents of Tulare County and any interested parties in capturing images that best depict the county.

A panel comprised of community members and county staff will select images that best depict the Tulare County in four categories and award first place (best overall), second place and third place. Judging is based on creativity, photo quality, representation of Tulare County and relevancy to its category. First place photos in each category will be featured on the county website and county social media and the Tulare County Board of Supervisors will honor all winners at a board meeting.

Information and downloadable entry forms are available on the TCiCT Website at http://tinyurl.com/lu5gfja.

Entries may be submitted by mail, e-mail or drop-off by Friday, January 3, 2014. For more information, call Megan Flynn at 559-636-4806.

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ALEX OLDENBOURG

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Different Kind of Holiday Gift

We are in the holiday season and many of us think of what we might do to help others. There are many, many persons throughout the United States who are in medical need of a stem cell transplant after other cancer therapies have failed. Modern technology has made donating stem cells much like donating blood. The process is virtually painless and not only can new stem cells relieve the recipient of suffering, in most cases it can save his or her life.

Here in Tulare County there is one person right now who is in need of a stem cell transplant. That person is my former colleague, Elisabeth Krant-Latronico. Elisabeth has been suffering from a rare form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma for most of this year.

I was on the panel that selected Elisabeth to become the Tulare County Juvenile Court Commissioner in 1991. She performed admirably under difficult circumstances. She heard and adjudicated all juvenile dependency and delinquency cases in Tulare County. When I became Juvenile Court Judge, I found her advice and assistance invaluable.

For more than two decades Judge Krant has served with distinction on the Superior Court bench, most recently in the Porterville Division. This year she was forced to resign because of the severity of her illness.

For a stem cell transplant to be successful it must be from a donor with certain genetic characteristics that closely match the person receiving the transplant. Men and women under the age of 45 are ideal candidates.

A national registry exists in which donors are matched with potential recipients. A potential donor wanting to register is mailed a special kit that instructs the donor how to take a simple cheek swab. The swab kit is then returned to the registry, a genetic analysis is done of the sample, and the donor is listed on a confidential database. At no time is a donor required to donate even if requested to do so. A donor can ask to be removed from the database at any time.

In early December a local outreach campaign will begin for Elisabeth and others like her for the national registry, BE THE MATCH. Potential donors can go online to register directly at www.bethematch.org. There one can learn about the whole process and request that a swab kit be mailed for purposes of collection, typing and registration.

In addition, the Central California Blood Centers in Visalia, Porterville, and Fresno will also take donor samples and assist in bone marrow and stem cell registration at any time

Special donor registration events for Elisabeth, and all persons seeking donor matches, are now being coordinated and will be held locally in Fresno, Kings, and Tulare Counties. One that is already confirmed will be held on Sunday, December 8, from Noon until 4pm at the Lifestyle Center in Visalia. For more information on additional donor registration dates and locations, please call Central California Blood Center at (559) 288-6319.

If this is something you want to do, please do not delay. Time is of the essence.

— William Silveira, Retired Judge,

Zoning Classifications and Property Descriptions Can be Confusing

WILLIAM MENKE

Zoning classifications and property descriptions are meant to organize and clarify, but they often just confuse. Land use in Tulare County is divided into thirty-one zone classifications. All zoning designated with an "R" is residential. For example, "R-1" is zoned for single-family residential and "R-2" is zoned for single-family residential or two-family dwellings (like duplexes). "AE" indicates exclusively agricultural zones. The number following "AE" is the minimum acreage—as in "AE-10." "C" identifies commercial land. "C-1" is zoned for neighborhood commercial such as banks, grocery stores, and restaurants. Manufacturing zoning categories include "M-1" (light) and "M-2" (heavy).

If a physical circumstance creates a hardship in the county, a Zone Variance Application can be submitted to the Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA). The Planning Commission evaluates each zone variance request on its own merits. There is an initial $3,490 deposit due when filing a zone variance request. Each city in Tulare County has its own process for evaluating and approving variances.

Beyond remedying hardship brought about by physical circumstances, there is another approach for altering zoning. The basic process for changing the zoning of a particular piece of land in the county begins with filing a letter of request and a Zone Change Initiation Application with the Tulare County RMA. The Board of Supervisors hears the request. If the request is approved, a Zone Change Application is filed with the RMA and heard before the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

The base filing fee for a Zone Change Initiation Application is $3,333. According to the Tulare County RMA, the average cost for processing a Zone Change Application is $5,417. Land currently impacted by airport proximity or State Fish & Game Department concerns may be subject to additional fees for zoning changes. Cities throughout the county have their own unique procedures for assessing and granting zoning changes.

Not to be confused with zoning classifications, property descriptions like "strip mall" (a typically open-air facility anchored by a big retail chain) help to focus categorization of property usage for government, investors, and community planners. Similar sounding land usage descriptions such as "business park" and "industrial park" often lead to confusion—"business parks" are areas of land with several office buildings located together, whereas "industrial parks" are locations set aside for industrial development. To add to the potential confusion, there are now "eco-industrial parks" (EIPs). EIPs are essentially industrial parks that purposively strive to maximize efficiency and minimize pollution. Zoning issues are complex and can vary by jurisdiction.

— William Menke is a Realtor with the Guarantee Real Estate Flex Office. He can be reached at William@Guarantee.com.

SHARE YOUR OPINION WITH US

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editor@ourvalleyvoice.com

What's 'Common Core'?

CRAIG WHEATON, VUSD SUPERINTENDENT

Last winter, I dedicated a column to an explanation of the new Common Core State Standards. In fact, I started with, "A big change is on the horizon for California schools: the implementation of Common Core State Standards." In September, I read about a recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools, and it revealed that 62 percent of adult Americans surveyed had never even heard of the Common Core. Recently there has been an enormous amount of press about Common Core, some accurate and, frankly, a great deal of it just not so accurate. So, I thought I'd give the topic some local flavor.

Standards are what all students should know in each subject and at each grade level. Standards are not new to Visalia Unified or to California. We have worked with state standards since 1997 and "No Child Left Behind" accountability requirements since 2002. Standards and accountability have greatly improved learning for children in Visalia. Every year, we have more and more students at or above grade level across our district. In fact, the number of children at grade level has more than doubled in the last ten years – in Visalia.

We all have heard criticisms of educational accountability. Some say it has narrowed what kids learn in school, many feel it has relied on "bubble tests" too much or that there is just too much testing. Others are concerned about the need for problem solving, communication and writing skills.

The Common Core State Standards address many of these concerns. The new assessment system will be, once it is fully implemented, based on computer-adapted software; and that innovation promises to reduce testing time and to assess skills far beyond just multiple-choice questions. Common Core are the next generation of standards and are more strongly based on what students need to be able to do to enjoy a successful adult life in our globally connected world. One of the fundamental expectations from Common Core is that students be college and career ready when they leave high school. So, when I think about our children, I want to make sure they are prepared to be successful.

Common Core Standards will encourage students to read the kinds of material they will see in the workplace, along with literature and history. Students will spend more time problem solving, thinking through critical issues, justifying their opinions by text references and facts, and communicating their work to others in writing. I believe we will continue to devote time and resources to the visual and performing arts as well as English language arts, mathematics, social studies and science.

Common Core Standards are not the latest educational fad--it is what our children need to learn so that they can successfully compete and succeed, no matter what they decide to do after they complete high school. For more information on Common Core State Standards, visit "The Council of Great City Schools" website at www.cgcs.org.

Asian Citrus Quarantine Expands in Tulare County

An additional 197 square miles in Tulare County have been placed under quarantine for the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) following the detection of three psyllids near Exeter, Lemon Cove and the unincorporated area southeast of Porterville. Along with an additional 37 square miles of quarantine in Kern County, this brings the total quarantined area in the region to 888 square miles.

The expanded quarantine areas, shown in the "Tulare" and "Tulare/Kern" maps are available online at: www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/go/acp-quarantine-sjv.

In addition to the quarantines in these portions of Tulare and Kern Counties and nearby portions of Fresno County, ACP quarantines are in place in Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.

The ACP is an invasive species of grave concern because it can carry the disease huanglongbing (HLB), also known as citrus greening. All citrus and closely related species are susceptible hosts for both the insect and the disease. There is no cure once a tree becomes infected. The diseased tree will decline in health until it dies. HLB has been detected just once in California - last year on a single residential property in Hacienda Heights in Los Angeles County. HLB is known to be present in Mexico and in parts of the southern U.S.

Florida first detected the pest in 1998 and the disease in 2005, and the two have been detected in all 30 citrus-producing counties in that state. The University of Florida estimates the disease has tallied more than 6,600 lost jobs, $1.3 billion in lost revenue to growers and $3.6 billion in lost economic activity. The disease is present in Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina and Texas. The states of Alabama, Arizona, Hawaii and Mississippi have detected the pest but not the disease.

Residents with backyard citrus trees in the quarantine area are asked to not remove fruit from the area. Residents in the area who think they may have seen the Asian citrus psyllid are urged to call CDFA's Pest Hotline at 1-800-491-1899.

For more information on the Asian citrus psyllid and huanglongbing disease, visit www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/acp.

Maps available online show the quarantine area in Tulare County.

Valley Voice
Valley Scene

The Charlie Daniels Band

Charlie Daniels Band to Headline Tachi Palace

The Charlie Daniels Band will headline at Tachi Palace in Lemoore on Wednesday, December 11.

Born in North Carolina in 1936, Charlie Daniels was raised on a musical diet that included Pentecostal gospel, local bluegrass bands, rhythm and blues, and country music. He graduated from high school in 1955, formed a rock 'n' roll band and hit the road.

While en route to California in 1959, the group paused in Texas to record "Jaguar," an instrumental produced by Bob Johnston, which was picked up for national distribution by Epic. It was also the beginning for a long association with Johnston. The two wrote "It Hurts Me," which became the B side of a 1964 Presley hit. In 1969, at the urging of Johnston, Daniels moved to middle Tennessee to find work as a session guitarist in Nashville.

Among his more notable sessions were the Bob Dylan albums of 1969-70, "Nashville Skyline," "New Morning" and "Self Portrait." Daniels toured Europe with Leonard Cohen, and performed on records with artists as different as Al Kooper and Marty Robbins.

Following stints with Capitol and Kama Sutra, Epic Records signed him to

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Last year's Trek to the Nation's Christmas Tree ceremony included a memorial ceremony and entertainment.

88th Annual 'Trek to the Tree' Ceremony Set for December 8

Kings Canyon National Park will be the site of the 88th annual Trek to the Nation's Christmas Tree ceremony on Sunday, December 8. The 2:30pm event, which is sponsored by the Sanger District Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the National Park Service, will include the Jubilation Singers, Sanger High School Choir, Tubachristmas Ensemble and a non-denominational holiday message.

During the ceremony, a National Park Service representative will speak about the General Grant Tree's role as a national shrine in memory of the men and women of the Armed Forces who have served, fought and died to keep America free. A memorial wreath will be placed at the base of the General Grant Tree.

The ceremony requires a quarter-mile walk from an adjacent parking lot. Given limited parking at the grove, a free shuttle service will be available from the Kings Canyon Visitor Center parking area to the Grant Tree Trail. (Allow an extra 30 minutes to use this in-park shuttle service.)

Access through the entrance to

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Tulare County Symphony to Perform Annual Holiday Concert

Music Director Bruce Kiesling

The Tulare County Symphony's annual holiday concert has become a tradition for many families. Because of its popularity, it will be performed twice this year, at both 3 and 7:30pm on Saturday, December 14 at the Visalia Fox Theatre.

The concert features Christmas favorites, including "Nutcracker Suite" (Les Brown version), a "Polar Express" medley and a holiday sing-along. Several of the pieces have been arranged by Music Director Bruce Kiesling, who also composes music for film scores.

For the last two years, the symphony has held a Singer Challenge where local singers competed for a chance to perform with the orchestra. This year's winner, Abby Sherrill, will sing "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." The afternoon concert will feature a youth choir from Visalia schools, and the evening performance will have an adult choir performing the "Hallelujah Chorus."

Always a favorite at this concert is the singing of "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas," this year sung by Bryce Garges from Encore Theatre Kids troupe.

Tickets are $30 to $39.50, and available at the symphony office. Student prices are $10. Tickets are also available at www.tularecountysymphony.com. For more information, call 732-8600.

iBaseball Channel Gives Personal Views of America's Pastime

STEVE PASTIS

A couple years ago, former Major League pitcher Mike LaCoss was looking for a way to do something connected to the sport he played for 18 years. He discussed his ideas with a small group of close friends and associates.

"As a former player, scout and coach, I felt we could figure out something to do that no one's ever done," LaCoss explained. "I felt there was a niche."

The result of these discussions was the iBaseball Channel, a website with an office and studio in Lemon Cove, which features unscripted baseball videos, a baseball blog, a forum and a variety of features focusing on America's Pastime. LaCoss is its founder and CEO.

"We really are a fresh take on the age-old game," said Roy Giovannoni, director of production. "It really is about talking shop. We're just trying to present the conversations as they happened."

"The bread and butter of this is that there are thousands of players, coaches and scouts – baseball people – that possess a story," said LaCoss, adding that he wanted to give baseball fans more than the "boilerplate interviews with all the redundant questions that come up year after year. It came to a point where we built a site and started acquiring equipment."

Soon LaCoss and his team were interviewing such baseball notables as former San Francisco Giants owner Bob Lurie, former Giants Manager Roger Craig and former player, New York Yankees CEO and Giants President Al Rosen. "We went and got a real long story from (former Major League player and manager) Dusty Baker who grew up in Riverside," said LaCoss. "That kind of got us rolling."

LaCoss has stayed connected to the people he knew during his years in baseball. "I have all the baseball contacts from little league to Major League baseball," he said, adding that he contacts former players when they visit California. He also has the advantage of having spent time on the bench and in the locker room with many of them. "I already know some of their stories," he noted.

Stories are the main focus of the website, said LaCoss. "It could be a little league player to a Major League

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Mike LaCoss and Roy Giovannoni record weekly podcast. Photo by: Steve Pastis

Carolyn Martin

Carolyn Martin Returns to Mavericks

Carolyn Martin will once again perform her music – ranging from the western swing music of Bob Wills and Spade Cooley, to the torch songs of the 40s, to American pop songs from the Greater Generation era – at Mavericks Coffee House in Visalia on Monday, December 16, at 7 pm.

Backing her on stand-up bass will be her husband, Dave Martin, a music producer and studio musician based in Nashville.

Martin's CD "Cookin' With Carolyn" was named the 2011 Best Western Swing Album by the Western Music Association, while her previous project, "Swing," was named as one of the top swing CD's of 2009.

Martin was named the 2010 Western Swing Female Vocalist of the Year by the Academy of Western Artists and was inducted into the Texas Western Swing Hall Of Fame in 2011.

Her latest CD, "Tennessee Local," continues to stretch the bounds of traditional western swing. In addition to her original songs, the album includes songs from composers such as Irving Berlin and George Gershwin, as well as western swing composers like Cindy Walker and Fred Rose.

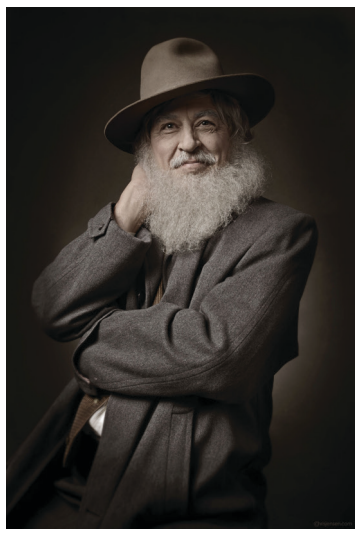
Tickets are $25. For more information, call 624-1400.

'Walt Whitman' Comes to Visalia Dec. 8

BILL HAXTON

Accomplished actor and singer John Slade ("Titanic," "L.A. Confidential") follows the tradition of Hal Holbrook's "Mark Twain Tonight" and brings to life another titan in American literature, Walt Whitman. While Twain was easily the funniest, Whitman's voice may well be the most relevant and inspiring.

Whitman lived in an age even more politically and spiritually divided than our own. Yet even after witnessing the carnage of America's Civil War and the assassination of its greatest president, he never lost his optimism. Refreshingly free of the cynicism of our modern age, Whitman believed that "even a mouse is a miracle," that love is the binding force of the universe, and that human consciousness is "surely headed somewhere" and will only continue to evolve and awaken.



John Slade as Walt Whitman

It's curious that when we are asked to name the world's greatest poets, we seldom include Whitman. Instead, the names that come to mind are Shakespeare, Homer, Virgil, Rumi, Tennyson and maybe Bashō if you are a verbal adventurer. These poets are from England, Greece, Rome, Persia and Japan.

However, if you ask that question in Europe or South America, Whitman's name often appears on that very short list. He has even enjoyed some surprising popularity on the Arabian Peninsula and in Central Asia. But although Whitman is highly regarded in the domestic pantheon of American literary scholars, he is nearly forgotten by the person on the street. For that matter, in most of American society, poetry itself is nearly forgotten.

Still, Walt Whitman keeps resurfacing, and for good reason. His spiritual and poetic center of gravity, a long poem called "Song of Myself," was so far ahead of its time when it was published in 1855 that today, 158 years later, we still haven't caught up with it.

Whitman would often gaze into the night sky and with the keen, farseeing eye of a poet, realized that space was endless and that our system of stars could not possibly be the only one, that star systems beyond count had to exist far beyond the range of our seeing. It wasn't until 20th century astronomer Edwin Hubble identified another galaxy outside our own, that Whitman's insight found scientific proof. In "Song of Myself," Whitman writes about this in stanza 45:

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of the farther systems.

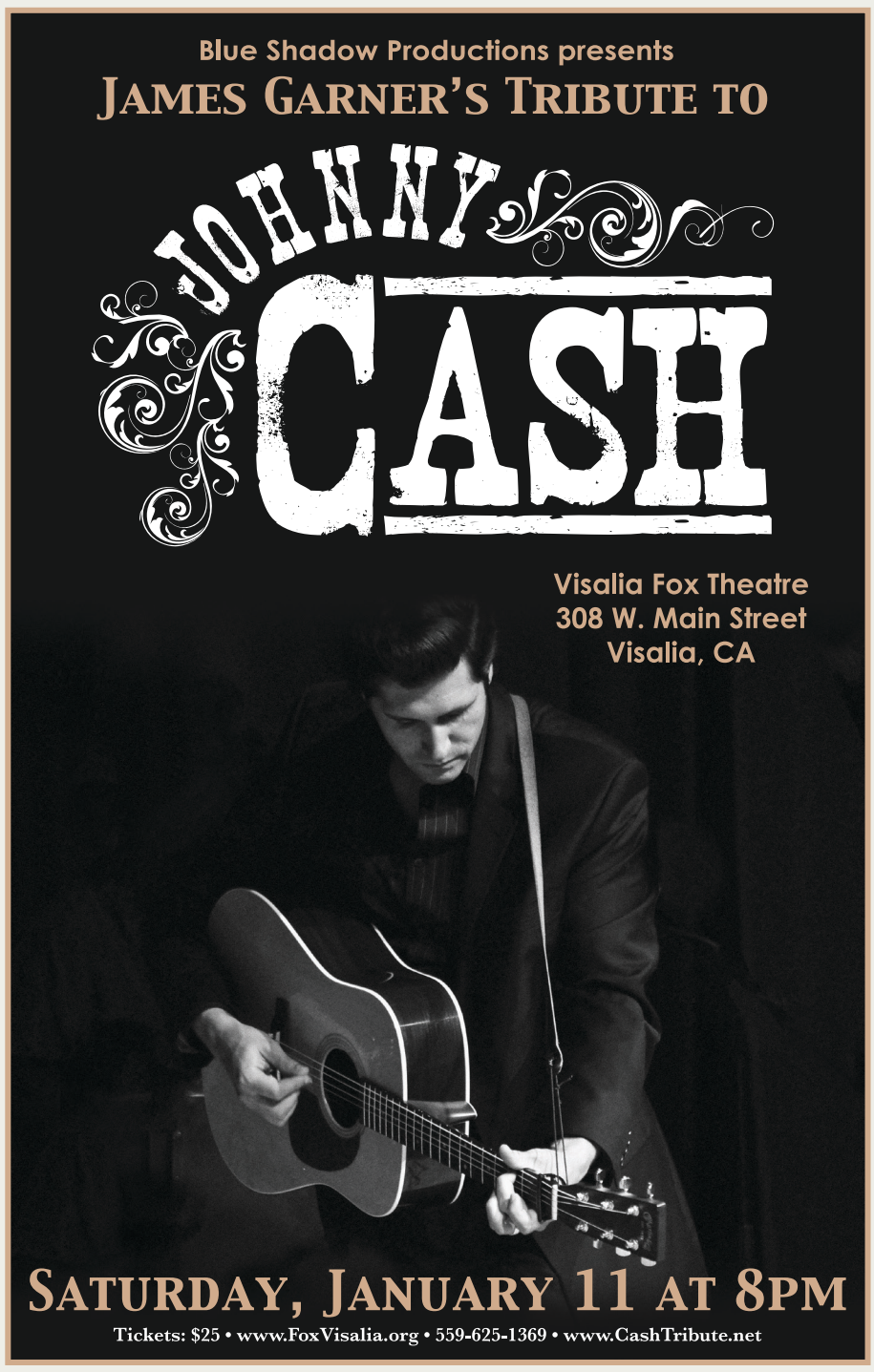
Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding.
Outward and outward forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not hazard the span...
They are but parts, and any thing is but a part.

Slade will present his one-man show at the Main Street Theater in Visalia on Sunday, December 8, at 5pm. Tickets are $12 at the door. Children and an accompanying adult admitted free.

RECYCLE THIS PAPER
...OR WE'LL FIND YOU



Lindcove Center Hosts Annual Citrus Fruit Display Day

Lindcove Research & Extension Center will host its annual Citrus Fruit Display Day on December 14, when visitors can sample the more than 100 citrus varieties grown at Lindcove, and participate in a sensory taste test conducted by Cooperative Extension horticulturist Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia.

The Master Gardeners as well as UC Farm Advisors will answer questions from home gardeners and citrus connoisseurs.

The event is scheduled from 9am to noon. The center is located at 22963 Carson Ave., Exeter.

Lindcove was recently featured in an episode of California Country's 30-minute weekly television broadcast, produced by the California Farm Bureau, describing the people, places and lifestyles that have made California the nation's largest food-producing state. The show illustrated the significant benefits of the Lindcove facility to the California citrus industry.

Citrus Fruit Display Day annually features more than 100 citrus varieties.

Caught a Ghost

December 20 Concert to Benefit Visalia Rescue Mission

Every year, Sound N Vision Foundation organizes a concert to benefit the Visalia Rescue Mission. This year, talent from Los Angeles, as well as local bands, will take the stage at The Cellar Door in downtown Visalia on December 20.

Headliner Caught A Ghost is a new project from Los Angeles songwriter and producer Jesse Nolan. The core of the group features Nolan's kindergarten classmate Stephen Edelstein on drums and sultry vocals, along with percussions from actress Tessa Thompson. The group's modern take on blue-eyed soul combines elements of classic Motown and stax volt compositions with influences from dubstep, 90s rap and contemporary electronica. A horn section and back-up female singers fill out the groove in the live setting.

Visalia classic-rock-meets-psych enthusiasts Slow Season play the middle slot. Heavy hitting drums and thick guitars are the elements of the band's sound.

Opening the show will be Visalia's favorite folksters, Gospel Whiskey Runners.

Tickets for the 21+ 9:30pm show are $10 and available at Ticketweb.com.

The Gospel Whiskey Runners

'An Avenue of Trees' Auction to Benefit Local Charities

The Hanford Chamber of Commerce will present "An Avenue of Trees," its 17th Annual Charity Christmas Tree Auction, 6-9pm on Thursday, December 12, at the Civic Auditorium.

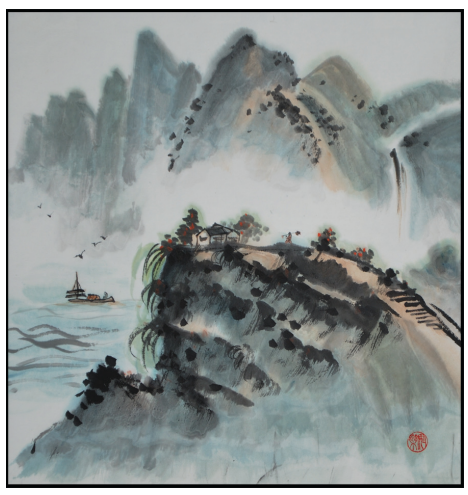
The event, which benefits 12 local charities, will include hors d'ouevres, dinner, music and silent and live auction.

For tickets or more information, call 582-0483.

Arts Visalia Hosts Chinese Brush Painting, Holiday Show and Sale

KEVIN BOWMAN, ARTS VISALIA GALLERY DIRECTOR

Returning to Arts Visalia this month will be the beautiful works of Chinese brush painting by Joy Harvey and her students. Harvey has taught classes in Chinese brush painting and calligraphy at Arts Visalia since we opened our doors, and is a well-recognized artist with a loyal following of students.



Chinese brush painting by Joy Harvey

This exhibition will showcase paintings by Harvey and several of her longtime students, many of whom have studied with her for years, in addition to accompanying her on annual trips to China where they take intensive workshops from masters of this traditional Chinese art form.

Brush painting dates back literally thousands of years in China, and carries with it a great deal of tradition and reverence. Directly related to Chinese calligraphy, the art of painting using Chinese inks on paper is an almost meditative medium requiring a disciplined focus on detail and a great deal of practice.

A Springville resident, Harvey became fascinated with Chinese art and art history while she was a student at Mills College, followed by study with the noted artist Jean Shua Chen at the University of California, San Diego. In 1987, she began traveling to China to further her knowledge and skill in this art. In fact, several of the artists in the group just returned from a month-long trip to China, one they embark upon almost every year, where they study with recognized experts, visit museums and exhibitions, and return home with a wealth of inspiration.

Also in December, Arts Visalia is hosting its 2013 Holiday Show and Sale, offering a wide array of original artworks and handcrafted items in time for the gift-giving season. At this time of the year, Arts Visalia's Gift Gallery expands to offer a wide selection of unique gift cards, wood works, ceramics, fiber arts, paintings, prints, photographs and other high-quality, handcrafted items with an emphasis on work created by local and regional artists.

The Chinese Brush II and the 2013 Holiday Show and Sale will be on display through December 21, with a special opening reception 6-8pm on Friday, December 6. The opening reception is a big night for Arts Visalia as it marks its annual Holiday Raffle, an important fundraiser for the art center. This year, the prizes include over two dozen prizes, including the top ticket, a $500 cash prize. Other prizes include a private gourmet Persian cuisine dinner for a party of six to eight, gift baskets, artworks and gift certificates. Tickets are on sale for $25 and you need not be present at the time of the drawing to win.

For more information, call 739-0905, email artsvisalia@sbcglobal.net or visit www.artsvisalia.org.

EVENT CALENDAR

MUSIC

December

Dec. 6 – Talib Kwell with Planet Asie – 8:30pm
Talib Kwell with Planet Asie and Omar Aura & DJ Ren Rock perform at the Cellar Door for the early show. For information, call 287-7067.

Dec. 6-7 – Keith and the Crawdads – 7-10pm
Every Friday and Saturday, Keith and the Crawdads are featured at Crawdaddys Visalia. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Dec. 7 – College of the Sequoia's Choral Christmas Concert – 7:30pm
Tickets, $10, will be available at the door or by calling the COS Box Office at 730-3907.

Dec. 7 – Winter Dance Party – 7:30pm
A & W and Visalia Fox Theatre will present a tribute to legends Buddy Holly, Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens. The live concert features hit songs of the 50s era. For information, visit winterdanceparty.com or foxvisalia.org.

Dec. 9-12 – Annual Christmas Production
The Creative Center will present its Annual Christmas Production at the Jon Ginsburg Gallery Main Stage at 410 E. Race Avenue. For information, 733-9329.

Dec. 9 – A Special Holiday Concert – 7 pm.
The Best of the Best Vocal Talents of Central Valley Christian High School, Golden West High School, Mt. Whitney High School, El Diamante High School, Redwood High School and College of the Sequoias will perform at the Visalia Fox Theater. Doors open at 6pm Tickets, $5, available at foxvisalia.org.

Dec. 11 – David Laswell and the Rounders – 7-10pm
On Wednesdays, its KJUG Country Music night and David Laswell and the Rounders at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E Main Street. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Dec. 11 – Charlie Daniels Band – 7:30pm
No one can fiddle like the famed country music legend Charlie Daniels. The man responsible for "The South's Gonna Do it Again," "Long Haired Country Boy," and his signature song, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," will appear at the Tachi Palace in Lemoore. Tickets go on sale on September 27, for $40, $60 and $85. For information, visit tachipalace.com.

Dec. 12 – Cody Torres – 7-10pm
On Thursdays, singer and musician Cody Torres performs at Crawdaddys Visalia playing classic Country and Rock hits. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Dec. 13-14 – The 2nd Floor Night Club – 10-2pm
Every Friday and Saturday, Crawdaddys Visalia's 2nd Floor Night Club features DJs and dancing to hip-hop, techno, disco and more. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Dec. 14 – Annual Holiday Concert – 3pm, 7:30pm
The Tulare County Symphony Orchestra's holiday concert includes more than 200 performers showcasing the talent through Tulare County. This popular holiday event will include two showings at 3pm and 7:30pm at the Visalia Fox Theater, 308 W Main Street, Visalia. For more information, visit tcsymphonyleague.org.

Dec. 16 – Carolyn Martin – 7pm
Mavericks Coffee House in Visalia will welcome back Texas Western Swing Hall of Famer Carolyn Martin. Tickets are $25.

Dec. 16 – COS Music Department Finals Recital - 3 & 7pm
The College of the Sequoias Music Department will hold its Finals Recital at 3 and 7pm in the Sierra Music Building on the Visalia Campus.

Dec. 16 – Carolyn Martin – 7pm
Mavericks Coffee House in Visalia will welcome back Texas Western Swing Hall of Famer Carolyn Martin. Tickets are $25.

Dec. 17 – 3's A Crowd – 7-10pm
On Tuesdays, 3's A Crowd with Rosalinda Verde perform at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E Main Street. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Dec. 21 – Sons of the San Joaquin – 3pm
Sons of the San Joaquin, a trio composed of brothers, Joe and Jack Hannah, and Joe's son Lon, will perform western music celebrating the American Cowboy. Tickets for the event held at the Visalia Fox theater are $19-23. For information, visit foxvisalia.org.

Dec. 21 – Foot of Feathers – 7pm
Foot of Feathers with smalls and Little Hearts perform the early show at The Cellar Door in Visalia. For information, call 287-7067.

January

Jan. 5 – Danielle Belen 3pm
Virtuoso Violinist Danielle Belen will return after 3 years, to perform at the Main Street Theater in Visalia. For information and tickets, visit threeriversperformingarts.org.

Jan. 11 – Tribute to Johnny Cash – 8pm
James Garners' Tribute to Johnny Cash will be held at the Visalia Fox. For tickets and information, visit foxvisalia.org.

Jan. 15 – 3 Doors Down Benefit Concert – 7:30pm
3 Doors Down will perform in concert to benefit the Visalia Rescue Mission at Visalia Fox Theater. Tickets range from $30-60. For information and tickets, visit foxvisalia.org.

EVENTS

December

Dec. 5 – Wine and Chocolate
Main Street Hanford will present its 13th Annual Wine and Chocolate tasting. Downtown Hanford shops will stay open late for the event from 6 to 9pm For tickets and information, visit mainstreethanford.com

Dec. 5 – Porterville Christmas Parade – 7pm
Porterville's Annual Children's Christmas Parade kicks off the holiday season. The Rotary Club of Porterville, the City of Porterville, and the Porterville Chamber of Commerce have sponsored this community parade for over 50 years. For information, call the Porterville Chamber at 784-7502.

Dec. 6 – Christmas Tree Auction
The 33rd Annual Christmas Tree Auction will feature a special "Giving Tree." The raffle winner will be able to select the charity of their choice as the recipient. The auction will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For information, 734-5876. Tickets available at visaliachamber.org.

Dec. 6 – Lindsay Chamber of Commerce Awards Nomination Deadline
The deadline to nominate businesses, organizations and community members for the Lindsay Chamber of Commerce Awards is Dec. 6. The awards will be presented at the Chamber's Annual Awards Banquet on Jan. 25 at McDermont Field House. For nomination forms and sponsorship information, visit thelindsaychamber.com.

Dec. 6 – Shop 1st Friday
First Friday, a multi-sensory art and entertainment crawl, is hosted by businesses and vendors in Downtown Visalia. Artists, musicians, performers, photographers, poets, sculptors and shop owners showcase community talent. For information, visit firstfridayvisalia.wordpress.com.

Dec. 6 – Exeter Christmas Parade – 6:30pm
"All I Want For Christmas" will be the theme of the Exeter Christmas Parade held in Downtown Exeter. The deadline to register for a parade entry is November 26. Turn in applications to the City of Exeter Community Services. For information, call 592-5262.

Dec. 6 & 13 – Peña Planetarium Double Feature – 6 & 7pm
Peña Planetarium will host "Christmas Traditions Around the World" and "Mystery of the Christmas Star." Admission: $4 adults, $3 children. Cash or check only. Tickets may sell out. Tickets include admission to both shows. No late seating after doors have closed. For information, 737-6334 or tcoe.org/planetarium.

Dec. 7 – Family HealthCare Network Annual Gala
The Family HealthCare Network Annual Gala will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For sponsorship information, contact Dante Rosh at 737-4707.

Dec. 7 – Shop 1st Saturday – 11am-5pm
On the first Saturday every month, the artists, restaurants, and vendors of Three Rivers open their doors for a town-wide celebration. For information, visit 1stsaturdaytr.com

Dec. 7 – Friends of the Library Book Sale – 9am
The first Saturday of each month is the Friends of the Tulare Public Library used book sale.

Dec. 7 – SPCA's Holiday Open House – 9am-4pm
Valley Oak SPCA will hold its annual Holiday Open House at the shelter (29016 Highway 99, Visalia) and at the clinic (2622 E. Main Street, Visalia) from 9 to 11 am. For information visit vospca.org.

Dec. 7 – Low Cost Pet Vaccination – 9-11am
Valley Oak SPCA will hold a low cost Vaccination Clinic at 2622 E. Main Street, Visalia. For information, visit vospca.org.

Dec. 7 – Spirit of the Holidays – 4-7pm
The 22nd Annual Spirit of the Holidays will feature wine tasting and a live Christmas tree auction at the Exeter Memorial Hall. Tickets, $50, are available at The Foothills, Sun-Gazette, The Bank of Sierra, Exeter Chamber, Nielsen & Associates Insurance, and from Kiwanis members.

Dec. 7 – 2013 Lemoore Christmas Parade – 6pm
Christmas Around the World will be the theme of Lemoore's annual Christmas Parade. Terry O'Hare D.M.D.-Kings Dental Group is the sponsor. For information, 924-6401.

Dec. 8 – Toy Drive for Lindsay Tots – 9am-2pm
Lindsay's Finest Car Club and the Lindsay Chamber of Commerce will hold a Toy Drive at China's Alley Restaurant, 170 N. Sweet Brier. Car clubs, solo riders and the public are invited. All toys will be given to the Lindsay Police Department for Santa Night. For information, call Ruben at 756-5052.

Dec. 8 – Old-Fashioned Christmas Open House – 1-4pm
Tule River Historical Society Museum in Springville will host a tour of the Museum and restored Murphy house, an authentically restored covered wagon, tack shop and blacksmith shop. Free refreshments, bake sale, jams and jellies, and caroling with special guests, Patty Torrey, Dutch Oven Cookers, and Mountain Men. Information, call 310-4689.

Dec. 10 – Quail Park Drive-Thru Coat Drive - 7-10am
In an effort to assist the Visalia Emergency Aid Council in distributing much-needed coats to local families, Quail Park Village will collect new or gently-used coats at the Retirement Village, 4510 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia. Hot cider and pastry will also be available. For information, call 624-3503.

Dec. 11 – Platt Electric Supply Ribbon Cutting - 10-10:30am
Visalia Chamber of Commerce will host a ribbon cutting at Platt Electric Supply, 10331 W. Goshen Ave.

Dec. 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration – 4pm
The Catholic Church of Visalia will celebrate the 482 Anniversary of the Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The grand procession will depart from St. Mary's Church to the Visalia Convention Center. The Solem Mass will be celebrated by his Excellency Bishop Armando X. Ochoa and Msgr. Raymond Dreiling. To reserve seats, contact Cuca Anaya at 625-2414.

Dec. 12 – An Avenue of Trees – 6-9pm
Hanford Chamber of Commerce presents the 17th Annual Charity Christmas Tree Auction in the Civic Auditorium. Twelve local charities will benefit. Cost of $50 includes dinner, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, music, silent and live auction. For information, call the chamber at 582-0483.

Dec. 13 – Word 1 – 8:30am
Tulare Public Library will hold a computer class on Microsoft Word. To register call 685-4503 or stop by the research and information desk.

Dec. 13 – Sweets With Seniors – 9am
Lemoore Recreation Department, Jaminson High School and the American Legion will host a holiday breakfast at the Civic Auditorium. Seniors will receive a free pancake, sausage and egg breakfast, enjoy entertainment by local students and finish the day with sweets provided by West Hills College. Information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

Dec. 13 – Fill Freddy the Fire Truck – 10am-12pm
Main Street Hanford and Keller Williams Realty are partnering to Fill Freddy the Fire Truck. Fifteen downtown businesses will collect non-perishable food items from November 29 through Dec. 13. Collected items will go to the local Salvation Army to help those in need. Contact Main Street Hanford at 582-9457 or Michelle at Keller Williams 362-2923 for information.

Dec. 14 – Tinsel Toy 5K and 1/2 Mile Run/Walk – 8am
The Visalia Runners will hold a 5K and 1/2 mile Run/Walk on at the Tulare Outlet Center. Proceeds will benefit Salvation Army (toys for needy children) and local cross county teams. Long-sleeved holiday-themed shirts go to all entrants. Christmas ornaments awarded to 5-year age-group winners. The kids can get their picture taken with Santa Claus. Registration information on www.visaliarunners.org.

Dec. 14-15 – Model Railroad Christmas
Visalia Electric Railroad Modelers and Historical Society will host A Model Railroad Christmas at the Sequoia Mall. The event features model trains, N Scale displays, Club HO Scale Display and sample of scenery under construction. A raffle to win a working HO Scale layout is also featured. On Dec. 14, the event will run from 10am to 8pm; On Dec. 15, from 11am to 4pm There is no charge. For information, call 733-1196.

Dec. 14 – Special Book Sale – 9am-4:30pm
The Tulare Public Library will have a special book sale featuring coffee table books, handmade wreaths and more! This will be located in the space originally planned as the Library Café.

Dec. 14 – LREC Fruit and Tasting Display – 9am-12pm
Lindcove Research & Extension Center Fruit and Tasting Display will be held at the LREC Center, 22963 Carson Ave., Exeter. See and taste more than 100 citrus varieties that are grown at Lindcove. Horticulturist Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia will conduct a sensory taste test and Master Gardeners and UC Farm Advisors will answer questions from home gardeners and citrus connoisseurs.

Dec. 15 – Yappy Hour – 1-3pm
Yappy Hour at The Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria will benefit Valley Oak SPCA. Admission, $10, incudes light appetizers and two drink tickets. Well-behaved, leashed pets are welcomed. For information, call 713-4694.

Dec. 15 – 6th Annual Miniatures Exhibition and Fundraiser – 2-4pm
The Tulare Historical Museum will hold a reception for Miniatures Artists in its Audio-Visual room. The 6th Annual Miniatures Exhibition will be on display through Mar. 15. The miniatures will be raffled and posted on the museum's website. Tickets are $5 each or 3 for $10. Gallery Hours are Thursday through Saturday from 10am-4pm For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

Dec. 15 – The 68th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade Highlights – 7 p.m
ABC30's one-hour special The 68th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade will be shown Dec. 15 and on Christmas day at 5pm The entire parade will also be viewable online at abc30.com after the special airs on Dec. 15.

Dec. 17 – Social Media Marketing Jump Start - 10am-12pm
As part of its Business Development Series, Lemoore and Hanford Chambers of Commerce will feature a presentation on Social Media Marketing. The event will be held at the Kings County Office of Education, Lemoore Conference Center, 876 E. "D" Street. For information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

COMMUNITY

December

Dec. 5 – Blood Drive – 2pm-6pm
The Three Rivers Community Blood Drive will be held at The Three Rivers Memorial Building, 43490 Sierra Drive, Three Rivers. For information and other drives contact the Visalia Blood Center at 302-1300.

Dec. 6-7 – Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar
Sequoia Union PTC will host the Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar Dec. 6 at the school, 23958 Ave. 324, from 1 to 4pm and Dec. 7 from 9am to 4pm. Local artisans, baked goods, kids crafts and specialty coffees are featured. For information, call 805-0987.

Dec. 6 – Visalia Philatelic Society Annual Christmas Party – 6pm
The Visalia Philatelic Society Annual Christmas Party will be held at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer Street. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

Dec. 10 – Exeter Woman's Club Annual Christmas Luncheon – 11:30am
Members of the Exeter Woman's Club will have their annual Christmas luncheon at the Clubhouse, 201 Kaweah Ave. For information, call 592-6738 or visit exeterwomansclub.com.

Dec. 11 – The Knitting Club – 5:30pm
The Tulare Public Library Knitting Club meets every other Wednesday. However, due to the holiday, there will be only one meeting. To register call 685-4503 or stop by the research and information desk.

Dec. 12 – Holiday Gathering – 4:30pm
Visalia Senior Housing I, II, and III will hold its Annual Holiday Gathering at 3900 W. Tulare Ave., following the financial and board meetings. Wine and hors d'oeuvers will be served.

Dec. 12 – Exeter Woman's Club Home Tour – 4:30-8pm
Exeter Woman's Club presents their 3rd Annual Christmas Home Tour featuring four beautifully decorated homes, live music throughout the evening, hot cocoa and snacks. Tickets are $15. For information, call 592-6738 or visit exeterwomansclub.com.

Dec. 14 – Second Saturday Book Club – 11am
The Second Saturday Book Club will meet in the Charter Room to discuss "Mrs. Kennedy and Me." To register call 685-4503 or stop by the research and information desk.

Dec. 19 – Last Thursday Book Club – 6pm
The Last Thursday Book Club will discuss The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. To register call 685-4503 or stop by the research and information desk.

Dec. 20 – Old Fashioned Christmas Luncheon – 11:30am-1pm
The Visalia Senior Center will host a lunch, fellowship and "glad tidings" with Christmas carols, activities and a Christmas luncheon. Special guests will perform. Tickets for the limited seating event go on sale Dec. 2 at $3.50 for ages 55 and over and $4.50 for guests. For information, 713-4381.

Dec. 21 – Sierra Traditional Jazz Club Christmas Party
The Sierra Traditional Jazz Club of Three Rivers will hold its annual Christmas Party at Three Rivers Memorial Building, corner of Sierra and Skyline drives. Bring finger food and snacks to share between sets. For information, visit jazzaffair.info.

January

Jan. 9 – Philatelic Society Stamp Scramble – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society regular meeting and auction will also feature a Stamp Scramble at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer Street. Doors open at 6:15. The meeting begins at 7pm with the auction starting at 7:30pm A raffle is held during each auction. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

Jan. 15 – Tulare Kings Master Gardeners Class
UCCE Tulare/Kings Master Gardeners will begin its Master Gardens class. For information, call 852-2735 on Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:30am

Jan. 23 – Visalia Philatelic Society Auction – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society will meet at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer Street. Doors open at 6:15 for bidders to examine auction items. The meeting begins at 7pm with the auction starting at 7:30pm A raffle is held during each auction. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

February

Feb. 6 – Visalia Philatelic Society Auction – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society will meet at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer St. Doors open at 6:15 for bidders to examine auction items. The meeting begins at 7pm with the auction starting at 7:30pm A raffle is held during each auction. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

Feb. 15 – Lemoore Kiwanis Valentine Dinner
The Lemoore Kiwanis will hold its Valentine Dinner. For information, 924-8811.

Feb. 20 – Visalia Philatelic Society Auction – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society will meet at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer St. Doors open at 6:15 for bidders to examine auction items. The meeting begins at 7pm with the auction starting at 7:30pm A raffle is held during each auction. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

March

Mar. 1 – Lemoore Lions Mongolian Barbecue
Lemoore Lions will hold a Mongolian Barbecue at the Civic Auditorium.

Mar. 13 – Visalia Philatelic Society Auction – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society will meet at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer St. Doors open at 6:15 for bidders to examine auction items. The meeting begins at 7pm with the auction starting at 7:30pm A raffle is held during each auction. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

See more events online

ourvalleyvoice.com

'Christmas Through a Lens' features a collection of holiday vignettes.

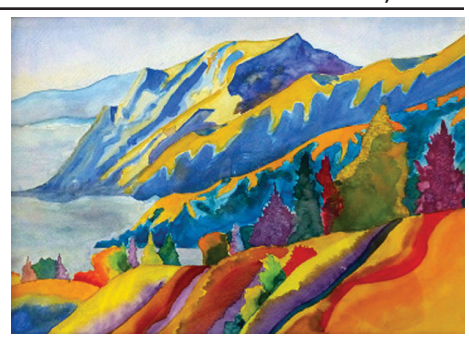
Jon Ginsburg Gallery Presents 'Christmas Through a Lens'

The Creative Center Players will present their 2013 Christmas production, "Christmas Through a Lens," an original production directed by Performing Arts Department head Rosalinda Verde, with assistance from instructors Soozee Edminster, Mark Rogers, Ginger Allen Barszcz and Aaron Albright, and a cast of 40 actors.

Featuring scenes from a photography studio where all sorts of characters show up for their annual Christmas photo session, the vignettes are filled with comedy and conflict, displays of amazing music and dance, and a strong message about the love that reigns during this special season. The show includes performances by the Creative Center's "Blues Brothers" and "The Shepherds," plus an opera diva.

The Creative Center's Jon Ginsburg Gallery is at 410 E. Race Ave., Visalia. Admission is $6 per person. Matinees will be at 12:30pm on Monday, December 9, and Tuesday, December 10, and evening performances will be at 7pm on Wednesday, December 11, and Thursday, December 12. For reservations, call 733-9329.

Art Center Presents Two Exhibitions



The Kings County Art League's Annual Members' Winter Show, at the Kings Art Center through December 29, features work by Tedra Griswold Battaglia (bottom) and Wendy Griswold Lewis (top). The exhibition is sponsored by Harold and Janice Nikoghosian.

The Kings Art Center is also showcasing artwork by K-12 students in Kings County at its 20th Annual Young Masters' Show, which also runs until December 29. The gallery is open Wednesday through Friday, 11am to 4pm, and Saturday and Sunday, noon to 3pm.

For more information, visit www.kingsartcenter.org or call 584-1065.

Lemoore Christmas Parade Set for December 7

"Christmas Around the World," the 2013 Lemoore Christmas Parade, sponsored by Kings Dental Group and Dr. Terry O'Hare, D.M.D., will begin in downtown Lemoore at 6pm on Saturday, December 7. For more information, call 924-6401.

THEATER

December 6-8 – The Best Christmas Pageant Ever
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," a hilarious Christmas tale of a couple struggling to put on a church Christmas pageant. For tickets, call 739-4600. For information visit, enchantedplayhouse.org.

December 6-8 – Love, Loss, and What I Wore
Love, Loss, and What I Wore, a series of vignettes about the nostalgic power of women's clothes, will be presented by The Visalia Players at The Ice House Theatre, located at the corner of Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on December 6-7 and a matinee will be at 2pm on December 8. For information, visit visaliaplayers.org.

December 6-8, 13-15, 17, & 20-21 – A Dicken's Christmas Carol
Encore Theatre Co. presents "A Dickens Christmas Carol," the story of an old theater troupe embarking on its 15th annual farewell tour of the classic Dickens tale. For tickets call 686-1300 or visit encore.jctalbert.com.

December 8 – Music at the Main – 5 p.m.
John Slade as Walt Whitman will perform at the Main Street Theater in Downtown Visalia. For information and tickets, visit threeriversperformingarts.org/tickets.

December 9-12 – 'Christmas Through A Lens'
The Creative Center Players will present an original Christmas production featuring a cast of 40 at the Jon Ginsberg Gallery, 410 E. Race Avenue. Scenes from a photography studio are depicted with all sorts of unusual characters showing up for their annual photo session. The show, directed by Performing Arts Department Head Rosalinda Verde, includes performances by The Creative Center's "Blues Brothers" and "The Shepherds," as well as a real opera diva. Matinee performances will be held Dec. 9 and 10 at 12:30 p.m. and evening performances on December 11 begin at 7 p.m. Reservations recommended due to limited seating. Admission is $6. Call 733-9329.

December 12-14 – The Unfinished Christmas Gift – 7:30 p.m.
The Lindsay Community Theater presents "The Unfinished Christmas Gift" at 190 N. Elmwood, Lindsay. "The Unfinished Christmas Gift" is the heart-warming story of a young boy, who is forced to live with his grouchy grandfather after the tragic death of his mother in a car accident. For information, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.com.

December 13-15, 20-21 – A Dickens Christmas Carol
Encore Theatre Company presents a comedy adaptation of the holiday classic A Christmas Carol at the Encore Theatre, 324 South N Street, Tulare. Advance tickets available. For more information, visit www.tulareencoretheatre.org.

January

January 9 – Forever Tango – 7:30 p.m.
For one night only, Broadway's Forever Tango will perform at the Visalia Fox Theater. Tickets, $25-100, are available at foxvisalia.org.

January 24-25, 31 – Respect
"Respect," a high-energy review of women in music from the early 1900s to the present, will be presented by The Visalia Players at The Ice House Theatre, located at the corner of Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30 p.m. on January 24-25 and a matinee will be at 2 p.m. on January 26. For information, visit visaliaplayers.org.

February

February 1-2, 7-9 – Respect
(See **January 24-25, 31** event.)

February 6-9, 14-16 and 20-22 – The Drowsy Chaperone
Encore Theatre Company presents "The Drowsy Chaperone" at the Encore Theatre, 324 South N St., Tulare. Advance tickets available. For more information, visit www.tulareencoretheatre.org.

February 7-9, 14-16 & 21-22 – Sleeping Beauty
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "Sleeping Beauty." For information, enchanted playhouse.org.

February 16 – Brian Regan – 7:30 p.m.
Comedian Brian Regan will perform at the Visalia Fox Theater. Tickets, $25-$47, are available at foxvisalia.org.

ART

December 4-20 – Arts Visalia Chinese Brush Exhibition and Annual Holiday Show and Sale
Arts Visalia will exhibit Chinese brush paintings by local artist Joy Harvey and her students in conjunction with the Annual Holiday Show and Sale. The sale features unique gifts by local artists.

December 6 – Porterville Art Walk – 5-8pm
Porterville Art Walk, held on the First Friday of every month, is a self-guided tour of local art galleries, art studios, museums and alternative art venues. For information, theportervilleartwalk.org.

December 7 – First Saturday in Three Rivers – 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
First Saturday in Three Rivers will present Over the River and Through the Woods. Open art studios and art vendors are featured. For information, visit 1stsaturdaytr.com.

December 8 – Kings Valley Art Center Guild Holiday Home Tour
The Kings Valley Art Center will hold its Holiday Home Tour. The center is located at 605 N. Douty in Hanford. For information, kingsartcenter.org.

December 14 – Christmas at the Gallery – 4:30pm
Exeter Courthouse Gallery of the Arts and Museum will host an art auction, silent auction, fine food, specialty wines, and entertainment. Tickets and raffle tickets are available at the Exeter Chamber (592-2919), Exeter Flower Company, Gallery, any board member, or by mail (P.O. Box 253, Exeter, CA 93221). A special raffle will award two paintings, "Rainbow Over Rocky Hill" by Marty Weekly and "Botanical" by Mary Roberts Dungan. The paintings are on display at the Courthouse Gallery. Raffle participants do not have to be present to win. Donation $40. The gallery is located at 125 South B Street, Exeter.

December 18 – Christmas Centerpiece Class – 6:30-8 p.m.
Ramblin' Rose Floral Design Class will be held at 242 Heinlen St., in downtown Lemoore. Cost of $50 to be paid at sign-up. For information, call 924-3863, or visit ramblinroseflorist.net.

December 29 – The Glow of Autumn Art Exhibit
The Exeter Courthouse Gallery of the Arts will showcase "The Glow of Autumn" through December 29. The exhibit features the works of two artists: Betty Berk from Visalia, and Jada Lee from Woodlake. Gallery and Museum hours are Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. The gallery is located at 125 South B Street.

December 29 – Annual Members' Winter Show
The Kings County Art League will host its Annual Members' Winter Show, featuring Tedra Griswold Battaglia and Wendy Griswold Lewis, through December 29. The gallery is open Wednesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 3 p.m. Admission is free. The gallery is located at 605 N. Douty Street, Hanford. For information, visit kingsartcenter.org.

December 29 – 20th Annual Young Masters' Show
The Kings County Art League 20th Annual Young Masters' Show will feature artwork by K-12 Kings County School Children. The exhibit will continue through December 29. The gallery is open Wednesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 3 p.m. Admission is free. The gallery is located at 605 N. Douty Street, Hanford. For information, visit kingsartcenter.org.

iBaseball

Continued from p. 17

player. We talk to everybody. It's important to get everybody on board."

Most of the segments are eight to 10 minutes, with some having two or three parts. "In some cases, such as Johnny Bench or Roger Craig, we had 40 minutes of their life story," said LaCoss.

The iBaseball Channel features a weekly podcast, usually ranging from 35 to 55 minutes where LaCoss and Giovannoni discuss the week's baseball news and respond to questions from listeners. The website also has features one might not expect on a sports site, such as food and music.

"We built a segment around cooking that mixes and matches baseball and cooking, and we built a segment around music and baseball," said LaCoss.

Musicians such as Jesse Valenzuela of the Gin Blossoms and Kenny Loggins share their baseball stories on the website, while former Cincinnati Reds pitcher Paul Moskau shares the recipe for Grandma Polly's Perfect Peanut Brittle.

The iBaseball Channel is currently developing segments about baseball people "entering the outdoor arena – barbecuing lamb chops, picking oranges, fishing for salmon or hiking Mount Everest," said LaCoss. "Any of these things that mix and match well are a hit for us."

The site will become more interactive, according to LaCoss. Visitors will be able to write a blog, respond to questions asked on the site and repost videos from the site.

"In most cases, a fan can't get close to a player to interact with him," he said. "This site gives him a chance to do that."

For more information, visit iBaseballChannel.com.

Former Kansas City Royals player Leon Roberts (left) talks about the George Brett pine tar incident with iBaseball Channel CEO Mike LaCoss.

Valley Oak SPCA to Host Annual Open House on December 7

Valley Oak SPCA will celebrate with its many friends and supporters this holiday season during its annual Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 7, at the Valley Oak SPCA Shelter from 9am to 4pm, and at its clinic from 9am to 11am.

No appointment is required at the Low Cost Pet Vaccination Clinic & Open House at the clinic, 2622 E. Main Street, Visalia, but all pets must be in carriers or on leashes.

The open house at the Valley Oak SPCA Shelter, 29016 Highway 99, Visalia, will offer an opportunity to have your pet's photo taken with Santa Paws for a $5 donation or donation of puppy food/pet supplies. Pets must be on leashes or in carriers. The event also features holiday treats, a bake sale, raffle prizes and a chance to meet adoptable animals, shelter staff and volunteers, and learn more about programs and services available.

Valley Oak SPCA's 2014 Pet Calendars will be available, as will Valley Oak SPCA hats, sweatshirts and tote bags. Adoption and microchip gift certificates are also available for purchase.

The local SPCA is seeking donations of beds, blankets, toys, treats, food and supplies for homeless animals this holiday season. To make a donation or for more information, visit vospca.org or call 713-4694.

Trek to the Tree

Continued from p. 17

Kings Canyon National Park will be free from 2-4pm that day to allow park visitors to attend the event.

Visitors are strongly advised to check road/weather conditions in advance and/or be prepared for bad weather. Walking surfaces may be slippery and snowy. Travelers should provide additional time to accommodate for weather conditions. Drivers must bring and be prepared to use tire chains or cables, if required. For weather and road condition information, call 565-3341 and press 1.

For more information about Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, visit www.nps.gov/seki or call 565-3341.

Impact Center Offers Holiday Double Feature

This month, the Impact Center in Visalia will show four double features of its popular holiday shows "Christmas Traditions Around the World" and "Mystery of the Christmas Star."

Audiences will begin the double feature in the History Theater with a showing of "Christmas Traditions Around the World." This perennial favorite with elementary-age students was reanimated and rescored last year from the original show produced by retired Impact Center supervisor Sam Peña. The show explores the different winter season traditions people across the globe celebrate at this time of the year.

Viewers will then move into the planetarium for a showing of "Mystery of the Christmas Star." This show investigates the possible dates for the birth of Christ and looks at the historical sightings of major astronomical events that so intrigued three wise men to cross a desert in search of a newborn king.

The double features will be held at 6pm and 7pm on two Fridays, December 6 and 13. The Impact Center is at 2500 W. Burrel Ave., Visalia. For ticket information, call the Impact Center at 737-6334.

It's a Model Railroad Christmas!

The members of the Visalia Electric Railroad Modelers and Historical Society will showcase the fun and excitement of model trains with several 'N' scale displays, the club HO scale display and a sample of scenery under construction, at the Sequoia Mall in Visalia.

Visitors can enter a raffle to win a working HO scale layout to start their own model railroad.

This free event will be held 10am to 8pm on Saturday, December 14, and 11am to 4pm on December 15. For more information, call 733-1196.

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Board Games Find Renewed Popularity

CYRIL THOMPSON

When most people hear the term "board game," they think of Monopoly, Scrabble, Risk or many of the other top-selling board games of the last 60-plus years. It might be surprising, then, to find out that board games - and card games - have made a recent comeback in popularity.

With the many options available to fill time, including smart-phone apps and the seemingly endless entertainment options at our fingertips, why have board games found their way into our free time? According to a recent article by Kevin Core of BBC News, there are a myriad of factors. One of the biggest is what he calls the "second-generation" board games. Beginning in the mid-90s, a new wave of board games began hitting the market with completely new mechanics and play styles. Cooperative play, where players play against the game as a team or must cooperate in order to win, is one such new mechanic. Newer generation game designers focus attention on keeping all players engaged in the game regardless of whose turn it may be, and this translates into a more enjoyable experience.

Many of these new games have also been translated into smart-phone apps where people are introduced to them for the first time. Some of the most popular such games are The Settlers of Catan, Ticket to Ride and Carcassonne, which have moved out of the obscurity of hobby-gaming stores and onto the shelves of major retailers.

In a November 19th article in *International Business Times*, Roxanne Palmer shares that researchers from several universities have found that playing board games boosts children's math skills. Parents and teachers are finding that they can promote number awareness and simple arithmetic in an enjoyable fashion.

Even libraries, including Tulare County Library, are beginning to host "game nights" recognizing the educational value of board games.

For many, getting together to play a board game is a way of connecting and sharing quality time with friends or family members in a more intimate way then sending text messages or keeping in touch on Facebook. At GameQore in Visalia, many of the players range in age from their late teens to late 30s. These players enjoy interacting with their peers in a face-to-face setting.

Whatever the reason, board games have been increasing sales across the country, and Visalia is no exception. At GameQore, the top-selling games for 2013 have been Ticket to Ride, Munchkin, Fluxx and The Settlers of Catan.

Cyril Thompson is the owner/manager of GameQore 107 E Main St., Visalia. He can be reached at www.facebook.com/gameqore or at 732-3969.

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Merle Haggard

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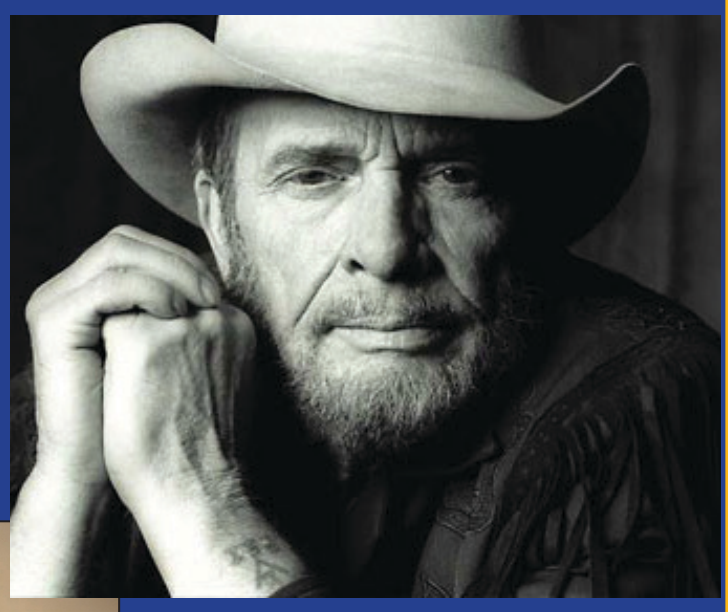
$75, $65, $55



Kenny Rogers

Thursday, March 13, 2014
8:00PM

$85, $75, $65, $55

FOX THEATRE

Both shows performed at the historic Hanford Fox Theatre
To purchase tickets online: www.foxhanford.com - or call (559) 584-7823.

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Charlie Daniels Band

Continued from p. 17

its rock roster in New York in 1976. The contract, reportedly worth $3 million, was the largest given to a Nashville act up to that time. Daniels rewarded the company's faith by delivering "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," which became a platinum single, topped both country and pop charts, won a Grammy Award, became an international phenomenon, and earned three Country Music Association trophies. By 1981, the Charlie Daniels Band had twice been voted the Academy of Country Music's Touring Band of the Year.

In April 1998, top stars and two former presidents paid tribute to Daniels when he was named the recipient of the Pioneer Award at the Academy of Country Music's annual nationally televised ceremonies.

"In his time he's played everything from rock to jazz, folk to western swing, and honkytonk to award-winning gospel," former President Jimmy Carter said. "In Charlie's own words, 'Let there be harmony, let there be fun and 12 notes of music to make us all one.'"

"Charlie's love of music is only surpassed by his love of people, especially the American people," former President Gerald Ford said. "He's traveled this land from coast to coast singing about the things that concern the American people."

Opening the show will be local act Poor Man's Poison.

Tickets for the 7pm show are $40, $60 and $85. For tickets or more information, visit www.tachipalace.com.

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